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GLIMPSES BEHIND THE VEIL

HERLINE KHOURY

Frontispiece

GLIMPSES BEHIND THE VEIL

By
H. B. KHOURY

With a Foreword by the Late
FIELD MARSHAL LORD ALLENBY

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS, LTD.
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

FOREWORD

BY THE

LATE FIELD MARSHAL LORD ALLENBY

MISS KHOURY tells in her first chapter of the early impulse which led to the compilation of this book, and how Destiny granted fulfilment of her wish. With a mind prepared by study, trained and receptive, our young authoress went forth in pursuit of adventure and knowledge. During extended travels in Eastern lands many were the adventures she encountered and wide the knowledge she acquired. With girlish interest and delight she leads us by the hand through countries old and new, inspiring us with her own enthusiasm to investigate legend and to discover truth.

Difficulties are brushed aside—they only add zest to her search and act as a stimulus to her will power. Little escapes her notice. Miss Khoury surveys a wide field, including in her view History, Geography, Ethnology, Art, Literature, and Religion, and comments intelligently and instructively on all.

ALLENBY

London,
1935

To

QUEEN SOURAYA

OF AFGHANISTAN

WHO FIRST MADE MY JOURNEYINGS POSSIBLE, AND TO ALL THE GOOD FRIENDS WHO HELPED ME IN MY TRAVELS, THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, NOR MAY I FORGET MY EVER-KINDLY FATHER TO WHOSE PRAYERS I OWE MY SAFE RETURN

"It is in the hearts of men that we make our longest journeys."

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NOTE:—For the translation of those poems which I have included in this book I am indebted to Clifford Troke.

HENEINE KHOURY

ILLUSTRATIONS

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GLIMPSES BEHIND THE VEIL

CHAPTER I

THE PHILOSOPHER'S WARNING

TO QUEEN SOURAYA

Star of the East, you rise in snow-white splendour
Upon the wide horizon of our hearts.
Poets let fall their pens to gaze in wonder
On loveliness beyond the praise of arts.

O lovely star that came from the great mountains,
To shine upon the desert's face forlorn,
Poets may hail you for your matchless beauty:
I hail you as the herald of the morn.

I WAS to travel the East. A dream of many years was come true. My passports were stamped in readiness; a letter from my bankers stated that the credits which I had asked them to furnish were now arranged; from my good friends in the diplomatic services had come a small pile of introductions, every one of which would smooth my way. I found myself walking with the stride of an adventurer, the white walls of the city dissolved before my eyes into seas and deserts and great forests. On every side of me gleamed a far horizon. I viewed them all in turn, and each had its mirage.

Then I met the old Arab. I came upon him suddenly in the narrow street from which my mind had escaped into dreamland freedom. He was a very old man, yet erect and smiling beneath the weight of years. He sold rugs and small carpets, together with

any junk on which he could lay his lean brown, predatory hands. His fellow traders of the streets respected him, saying one and all that he had "the lordly eye." They meant that his keen gaze seemed to convert polite entreaty to purchase into arrogant demand, that while his words were humble his bright glance radiated authority. Long practice had given him this power, which was well for him, since nothing short of hypnotism could have sold such goods as his at the prices he demanded.

I liked him well. A rogue he was no doubt, but a laughing rogue. I felt, too, that though he would not scruple to dispense with any moral code with which I was familiar, nevertheless he cherished somewhere within him a code of his own, a code which no pressure could break. From this fact came his dignity, which was not the pose of the common Arab hawker—who can tower for ten seconds above a sceptical tourist with all the majesty of the Commander of the Faithful—but a more enduring quality, a stiffening strand in the very fibre of the man.

I waved aside the goods he spread before me with a look which conveyed to him that he should have known better. For I was well acquainted with the real wares of which his were for the most part miserable copies. . . . He accepted my rebuke with a smile, together with a gesture which, like my glance, conveyed a tactful message. There was, of course, no question of business between us, that deft motion of the hand explained. It was merely from courtesy that he had offered his wares. That action was to show that he knew his place as a trader and would not enter into converse with a lady save with the excuse of trade. Yet, if I wished to speak with him, his approach had delicately made for me an easy opportunity. I wronged him deeply if I thought that he classed me with the gross and gullible tourists who infested our fair city

to the shame of the One True God—albeit to the profit of the deserving among the Faithful.

I shall not be believed when I say that all this was summed up in one brief gesture—yet such indeed was my old friend's power. Preliminaries dispensed with, we fell into easy talk.

I told him that soon I should be starting on a long journey, that I should cross the seas in a huge iron ship, that by road and rail I should travel to distant places, perhaps even to those far mountains which are known as the very roof of the world. He listened to my enthusiasm with a smile every rich curve of which was alive with secret knowledge.

Then, at last, he spoke.

"Yes, it is well to travel. But in the hearts of men we make our longest journeys."

Those words set me thinking. They were to colour all my years of wandering. Now I place them with all humility in the first chapter of my story. For pictures I have in plenty, and stories of strange things seen and heard. But only if I have travelled some little distance into the hearts of men and women in those far lands to which I journeyed is this record of my pilgrimage worth while.

CHAPTER II

CEDARS OF LEBANON

Were the axe laid to your bark, O Cedars of Lebanon
Deep in my heart the hollow blow would resound.
Yea, deep in my heart should I hear it
Though the roar of seas were between us.
At night I would start from my couch with a hammering of terror
Loud at the doors of my spirit; or were it at noonday,
My voice on a sudden be dumb, though at speech with my friend.

On that last desolate journey through the regions of darkness
When the Soul of man must wander in search of heaven,
Though the dust of the day be harsh as the sands of the desert,
Or the darkness be more than the fear-thickened blindness of caverns.
I shall escape for one hour to linger among you,
Cedars of Lebanon, lordly and lovely cedars,
And in that hour shall your coolness, and peace and beauty,
Breathe strength into my worn spirit, strength for the journey,
While your upper boughs shall whisper to angels, which surely are near them,
That they may come to the aid of one who has loved you,
Cedars of Lebanon, lordly and lovely cedars!

MOUNT LEBANON was the *first* stage of my travels. Before the Great War Lebanon was protected by seven kingdoms. In 1926 it was proclaimed a republic, under a native president, but it is in reality governed by France under mandate. Its chief products are olive oil, wine, nuts, wheat and silk, of which silk is the most important. The inhabitants include Marounites, Greek Orthodox Christians, Protestants and Catholics, besides the Druses and a few Muslims. Many Europeans and Americans live on the hills and are engaged in commerce.

The climate is excellent, and since in the summer months many holiday-makers arrive from the neighbouring countries, there are plenty of good hotels, built and furnished in the European style. Mount Lebanon well deserves to be called the Switzerland of the East. No one who has the chance should neglect seeing these beautiful mountains.

Beirut, the capital of the state or republic of Lebanon, is the seaport of Syria on the Mediterranean. It lies about sixty miles from Damascus, with which it is connected by railroad, and is a busy commercial centre, exporting silk, oil, pinewood and fruits, and importing cotton goods, coffee and machinery. It has a French Jesuit College and an American University, besides many schools and literary societies. Known for centuries as a city of learning, it is still regarded as the intellectual centre of the Arabic-speaking world.

Nahr-el-Kalb—"Dog River"—seven miles to the north, has an interesting tradition attached to it. The Greeks believed or imagined that at the mouth of the river stood a gigantic stone watch-dog which, on the approach of an enemy, gave the alarm by barking. The source of the river is Mount Sannin, in the Lebanon range, some 6,000 feet above sea-level. Going up the steep paths of that mountain you pass a number of stone tablets describing the expeditions of Sesostris—the legendary king of Egypt, famous for his amazing conquests; and also the deeds of Rameses II. Others commemorate the invasions of Sennacherib and some of the other Assyrian and Egyptian kings. A Latin inscription records the fact that Marcus Antoninus, "the conqueror of Germany," repaired the road and built bridges. A last tablet is inscribed as follows:

THE BRITISH DESERT UNITED CORPS
AIDED BY
THE ARAB FORCES OF KING HUSSEIN
CAPTURED
DAMASCUS, HOMS, AND ALEPPO
OCTOBER, 1918.

Beirut is one of the ancient Phoenician ports and was in the beginning of the seventeenth century the seat of the independent government of Prince Fakh-feddin, an enlightened Druse Chieftain, who ruled Lebanon so successfully as to satisfy both Christians and Druses.

In the Beirut Museum I specially looked at the collection of Phoenician antiquities—statues of the kings, among them Hiram, of biblical fame, pottery and golden jewellery of wonderful workmanship. The library which is housed in the same building is stocked with a goodly collection of books; and there are more than 22,000 Syriac and Arabic manuscripts. Count Phillip de Tasazi is the founder and librarian of that library, and it was he who so very kindly showed me around the different sections, putting his unrivalled knowledge at my disposal.

It is not established historically that the ancient city of Baalbeck nearby was built by the Phoenicians, the ancestors of the Syrians of to-day. Some say that Solomon had a hand in it, while others claim that it was founded by Cain, the perpetrator of the first biblical murder, who built it as a fort to protect himself after the pronouncement of the curse upon him. It is, however, a historical fact that Baalbeck at an early date commanded an important Phoenician trade route, and became a centre for the worship of Baal. It is well settled history that in the second century A.D. Antoninus Pius began the erection of

two great temples which, even in decay, impress the beholder. The entrance to the ruins is a quite modern construction, and was built by Kaiser William II on the site of the ancient staircase.

Where once there stood that awe-inspiring shrine which is variously called the temple of Baal, the temple of Jupiter, and at old Heliopolis the temple of the Sun, there now remain but six huge columns —the last of a group of fifty-eight, which formed the Peristyle Hall. These columns rise to a height of sixty feet, and can be seen long before you enter Baalabeck. Each column is seven feet in diameter, and consists of three parts joined together by iron clamps. They are built of smooth yellow stone, the capitals being corinthian in style. Not far from the temple is the shrine of Bacchus—one of the best preserved and most exquisite ancient buildings in Syria. The peristyle had thirty-six columns, out of which twenty-two are still standing. They, too, have corinthian capitals, and each is fifty feet high. Every space is filled with the bust either of a god or of an emperor, while to the left of the base the god Bacchus is shown being suckled by a nymph, while Pan, satyrs and bacchantes are depicted above. On the other side is the figure of an eagle about to soar. From the abode of Bacchus we went to see the temple of Venus, a round and typical pagan building of which the beautiful corinthian monolithic columns are a joy to the eye. For some time the Greek Christians used it as a chapel. Close by stand the remains of St. John's Church, which was at one period made into a mosque. Only three rows of the beautiful columns remain—a sight, nevertheless, well worth looking at. What a welter of faiths, I reflected, had struggled here.

Ehden, believed by some authorities to be the biblical Garden of Eden, lies 4,700 feet above the level of the sea, on a slope of mountains that close

in the beautiful and sacred Vale of Kadisha— "the Valley of Saints," through which a river flows to the Mediterranean. Ehden is the best point from which to visit the famous Cedars of Lebanon, which are over five thousand years old, and which in the days of Hiram, King of Tyre, were used for the temple of Solomon.

After more than two hours' ride on horseback along a very narrow and dangerous mountain path—rock bound all the way—we at length reached the upper plateau where lies the ancient cedar plantation. There are about seventy trees, large and small, two being of extraordinary size. These are called the King and Queen, and are of such girth that the circumference of the roots must be tremendous.

Some idea of the true size of these trees will be conveyed to the reader when I say that a cordon of sixteen men with arms out-stretched would just about suffice to encircle one of them. One tree, of singular appearance, has an artificial cavity with a door and a window; it is used by the priests for devotional purposes.

Near the trees is a church, and a small monastery for the monks. There visitors are given small pieces of cedar wood, or the fruit of the cedar itself, to take away as souvenirs. The latter is somewhat oblong in shape, like the fruit of the pinetree, and has a pleasant odour. Formerly entrance to the cedars was free of charge, but now the Government has fixed a small fee for those who wish to see them. "It is absolutely forbidden to take anything away from the plantation," read a notice, but I could see nothing portable in sight. The most remarkable tree I saw there was burnt to the roots except for just one quarter which had retained life owing to the fact that the branches of an adjoining tree had happened to come into contact with it before it was too late.

The Cedar Hotel, an up-to-date hotel with some fifty bedrooms, apparently does good business near the plantation, especially catering for visitors who can be seen in great numbers smoking their hookahs beside a big fountain, in which goldfish swim with beautiful unconcern. People from all parts of Mount Lebanon come here on holiday, for the view is marvellous and the site unique in that you find a plain stretching across the summit of a dangerous mountain. The mountain path, I learn, has been widened to allow motor cars to reach the hotel, so that it is no longer necessary to undertake the journey on horseback. Near Lebanon I had an amusing experience. In one of the villages I was invited to visit the Sheik who was nearly seventy years old. He had four married sons living with him, together with daughters-in-law and grandsons, all in one establishment, but each in a separate house, which was built of mud, the ovens being in the same room in which they slept. He took me round to visit all his sons, and introduced me to their wives and to his sisters. I noticed there were small holes in the walls, and enquired what they were for. He told me they were for the pigeons to come and roost at night. Then I questioned him about a little mud shelf on the wall. This, he told me, was for the lantern which was made to burn with olive oil and a wick in an earthenware jar. Next I was taken to an outer oven where the women were busy baking bread and stoking the furnace under the oven with logs of wood. They invited me to pat some loaves into shape and place them afterwards in the oven by means of the long flat pole which they used for that purpose. Shortly after I was sitting down to lunch with them and eating some of the bread I had been allowed to bake for myself.

It turned out that the Sheik was a widower and

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It turned out that the Sheik was a widower and

his daughters-in-law and his sisters were on the look out for a new bride for the old man. They even hinted that I might find the match worth while—but I politely declined! One of his grand-daughters then became confidential with me and told me when I asked her if she was yet engaged to be married that one of her cousins wanted to marry her, but they would not hear of it because the pretender to her hand was not rich enough—he had only eighty pounds to offer as dowry and had been turned down on that account. And worse still, she confided, they had agreed to marry her to a perfect stranger in the city who had offered one hundred and twenty pounds for her hand in marriage. The girl was quite upset about all this, and asked me if I would not see her brother, who was responsible for the making of these arrangements, which were not to her liking, and see if I could not influence him to allow the marriage to the cousin, with whom she had been brought up and with whom she was in love. I promised that I would, but knowing the East as I do I knew that it would have to be done in the most diplomatic fashion possible.

A few days later I was eating with the girl's mother and her brother, and I brought the matter up by first asking if Fatima was yet engaged. The brother explained to me at length the whole story, not dreaming of course, that I was well aware of the facts already. When he had explained to me the big difference between one hundred and twenty pounds and only eighty, I was given the opportunity of arguing with him along logical lines. Was it not better, I suggested, to give his sister to one whom they had known all their lives as a good man, even though he had only eighty pounds, than to trust her to a complete stranger just because he was able to offer a little larger sum in gold? They argued and debated with me for some time, but at length I won my point, and the girl got

the man of her choice. The wedding duly took place, and I was one of their guests. As it turned out, both families were delighted with the match, and I wrote them one of my best love poems to celebrate the great occasion. It has always seemed to me that the bartering of happiness for gold has been one of the customs that the women of the East have suffered most by. How can any woman hope for any kind of independence in her married life when she has been bought like any other chattel of the household?

Here is the bridal song I wrote for the happy lovers:

THE BRIDAL SONG

This day shall joy be measured in silver laughter,
Laughter of friends who are greeting a true man and his bride.
This day shall faith be measured in golden singing,
Song of the white-robed singers jubilant on every side.

Now is the time when earth gives promise of harvest,
And the opening blossom whispers of fruit to come;
While through the soil the gay green life is bursting,
Which soon shall be borne in triumph at harvest-home.

Pause in your joy, O bridegroom, pause at the bridal door
To hear the earth's sweet message of treasure in store.

If you shall husband it with loving care,
Think of what precious fruit the tree of life shall bear,
Give thanks to God, but when your hymn is sung,
Honour the gracious branch where that fruit shall be hung.

Needless to say the bride became my fast friend. With her I went one day to the church at Saidnaya, one of the strangest in the world. Most of its stairways are carved out of the rocks. Men are prohibited from entering the church, and only the Mother Superior is allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to offer prayers.

A man once tried to enter the church to find out why men were not allowed inside. He was found

stricken dumb, and all the doors had closed in his face, so that whichever way he turned he could not leave the holy building. He begged with signs that the nuns should pray for him, and since he had repented they asked the Virgin to forgive him, and his speech was restored.

One day coming down from the Cedars we met an old woman driving a donkey with a sack of wheat on its back, which she was taking to the mill for grinding into flour. The heavy load chanced to fall from the back of the ass and the short old woman with her rosy cheeks performed prodigies of effort to get it back on to the donkey again. She managed to do so at last without any help. Somewhat astonished, I went to her and said, "Good morning, Grandmama. I admire your courage and your strength to wrestle with this heavy load. May I ask you how old you are?"

"One hundred and ten years," she replied, "but don't be surprised, I am satisfied to live on cheese and curd milk, my daughter. Our quarter is called the den of lions here in Bshary." Then she took up her stick to beat the donkey into action once more, and turning as she went she called out, "Ha! ha! good-bye, my pretty one—this wheat will be ground before sunset."

They are indeed a hardy race.

In Mount Lebanon winter lasts for six months, during which time the people are forced to stay indoors near the fire, so they prepare in advance all their winter food—flour, wheat, lentils and dried vegetables. In the bitter weather while all the doors are blocked with snow there are no animals slaughtered and no fresh meat can be bought. So each family buys a small sheep and during the hot weather it is fattened up on mulberry leaves. When it has reached the desired fatness it is slaughtered and the meat

fried and put up into jars for winter use. All their cheese is made at home, and they get from the grape their molasses, wine, brandy and vinegar. Each house has a special cellar for the storage of winter food supplies, and much wood is also stocked there for use on the fire.

Though the country gets so cold the people are strong, and they sally out from their houses just like lions from their dens. All of them, men and women, have rosy cheeks.

The seasons change abruptly. The first time the rain came we were at the "Nooriah" Monastery, and all the pupils of the school went to find snails under the pine trees. I also joined them, and collected about a score, and these were boiled specially for me. While we were at supper the rains began in earnest. All that night lightning and thunder were shaking the building.

In Shika we attended another wedding ceremony. As is the custom in Mount Lebanon, in the evening all the bridegroom's relatives went riding on decorated horses to fetch the bride from her village. Before departure they held the ceremony of dressing the bridegroom. This is the way they do it. The priest who had been asked to bless the wedding ceremony, sat with the men in a separate room, waiting for the bridegroom and his father to come. When they entered, the father was carrying a tray on his head on which were all the new garments of his son. The father danced with the tray while oriental music was played, and then offered the tray to the priest to bless. He did so, and read a few verses over it. Then the bridegroom undressed before us all, and his father dressed him up with all the new things prepared for the wedding. After that they set out riding on horses with the priest along with them to bring the bride, shouting

all the while, "Long live the Bridegroom!" Soon they began firing their rifles in the air. The noise of that procession shattered completely the stillness of the night.

The bride's relatives had already taken the girl to the bath, and with her mother and their friends had put the henna on her hands and feet, the sign of joy, singing songs in praise of her and her future husband, and saying "Ayha ya—Arous—your bridegroom should be proud to have a perfect and beautiful girl and one so well bred as you." Every stanza of the songs ended with the words: "Lili, lili—lush," which they sang with much moving of the tongues and with their hands on their mouths.

After the religious ceremony they all returned to the groom's house, where many people were waiting, singing and firing their guns into the air. When the bride arrived at the entrance to the house she was given by her mother-in-law a piece of fermented leaven, and while she was still on horse-back she pasted that on the upper part of the door as a charm to bring good luck and joy to her new family. On entering she was received with incense, and rose-water was sprinkled over her. A loaf of bread was cut over her head, as a sign of blessing. Refreshments were offered, and then a dinner was given to all the guests who could stay, most of the food having been presented by the people of the village. After dinner the guests sat in a circle reciting verses of their own, some praising marriage, others decrying it, all in a comic spirit. That kind of poetry is called "Meanna," in Lebanon, where nearly everyone is a poet. Native sword play followed this, after which there was a final blessing, and we all took our leave.

Lebanon is famous for its poets, among whom the best known is the Yazigi family. Sheik Nasif el Yazigi has won great fame as an author, but now his

son has surpassed him, for it was he who wrote the Arabic verses which are carved beneath the statue of Christopher Columbus in Washington. When that statue was contemplated a great competition was announced open to all the poets of the world. Each might write a verse in his own language and the best would be chosen for the plinth of the great monument. And from all the verses submitted those of Ibrahim el Yazigi were chosen, since they were agreed to be the finest.

If I could punish those seas where Columbus suffered
I would take from them all their pearls to shed lustre
upon his tomb.

I fear that my translation does little justice to the beauty of the Arabic which is exquisitely poised in rhythm and rich in sound, but who can translate a poem?

Now let me pen a last memory of Lebanon. One day in the early morning we walked among the cedars and then went down to the caves of Kadisha, in the Valley of the Saints. It was before sunrise, grey and rather cold, and no other souls were stirring. A few stars still burned in the clear dark blue of the sky above Mount Lebanon which quivered with expectation of the sun.

In our ears was the roaring of the huge river whose path has been diverted many times during its long career. In the caves there are wide tunnels leading in all directions. We held up our lanterns in the darkness to see huge rocks and dark, mysterious pools. Then the light fell on pure white stones of fantastic shapes moulded by the eternal water through the long centuries as if by human hands. One natural sculpture was the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus in her arms.

I set down my lantern on a ledge of rock and by its dim light surveyed this mystery of nature. . . . After a while we turned to seek once more the outer air. As we neared the foot of the hills we could hear all around us the music of tiny streams, so different from the entombed torrent's dismal roar.

We ascended the hill once again to see the sunrise. To this valley, I thought, came Hiram, King of Tyre, and sent his men to bring cedars for use in the building of the Temple of Solomon. There are trees here before me that remember that day. Some have a memory of five thousand years. . . .

As I meditated upon these things a light began to fill the sky. From behind the mountain range the sun was rising over the valley. Looking down I saw through the mist the inhabitants lighting their fires outside the huts in preparation for breakfast. Round them I saw their children and the domestic animals. Now birds flew swiftly by me, screaming through the air. The noise they made as they darted over the hills comes always to my memory when I think of summer morning on Mount Lebanon. The sun shone red upon the red roofed houses among the pine trees till they were like rich roses surrounded by green leaves. How often had prophets and kings of olden times watched such a sight as this from our vantage point upon the mountain? And the labourers must have heard that solemn roaring of the Kadisha River as they went up the hill to cut the timber for Jerusalem. . . .

CHAPTER III

DEATH IN THE EAST

IN PRAISE OF DEATH

Death closes around the heart one icy hand,
And points to earth with the other.
Only the wise, who understand,
Greet Death as a brother.

Yet Death is brother indeed,
And the earth a bride
Offering the peace men need
With blossom-white arms open wide.

Let us have done with fear,
And make an end of sorrow,
Greet darkness with good cheer,
And if Death comes tomorrow
Think of the dreariness of morrows without end
And know Death for a friend.

TIME has done little to eradicate the ancient superstitions in face of death. Even in Christian Syria they still persist unchanged. When a person is thought to be dying the relatives and friends crowd into the house, the men and women keeping apart in separate rooms. Sometimes the women invade the sick chamber.

The priest is soon called to bring the Holy Eucharist and to give it to the sufferer if he is able to swallow. When the priest walks through the street he is not allowed to speak to anyone if he is carrying the Holy Eucharist. If the sufferer can speak he must now make full confession. At the same time he tells the priest all his secrets, and says how he wishes his heirs to divide the inheritance. As the end nears the Host is

placed in the mouth of the dying man and it is a custom to have a silk handkerchief under his chin not to let any of the Element fall down. Immediately after death the priest goes out quietly and returns straight to his church without uttering a word.

When the sufferer's eyes are at last closed in death the wails and shrieks of the women rend the air. They start dancing around the bedside, striking their faces, drawing black scarves around their necks, and shouting and calling upon the dead to rise and see the grief his departure has caused. If the dead man is a husband the wife cries, "Oh, my husband, oh, my lion and protector, rise up and witness my sorrow. Rise up and help your children whom you have left without support!" Often the wife addresses her dead husband as "my camel"—that being the symbol of burden-bearing. Meanwhile the other women have commenced to praise the dead, lauding his saintly character and leaving no good thing unsaid. If a bride has died, her wedding gown and all her new garments are brought to the bedside, and the wailings tell of her youth, and lament that she has not lived to know the delights of marriage. "She had not time to put on that which she had prepared," chant the mourners together. If the dead woman is a mother it is her daughter who leads the lament, addressing her lost parent as "protector and sharer of secrets." Always when the calamity of death befalls them the women of the East give way to wild despair. I have observed the same outcries in Syria, Egypt and Persia, and even in the mountain regions of Afghanistan. In every instance the mourners continually praised the good qualities of the deceased.

Both among Muslims and Christians when the first wild access of sorrow is past the body is washed, always by a person of the same sex. If the dead man is a Christian the priests return to offer a prayer in the

house before the funeral. The body is dressed in new undergarments and then there is placed upon the dead his richest robe. The corpse is now set in the centre of the room, and the whole apartment is left to the women, the men having withdrawn to another part of the house. The women sometimes smear indigo upon their faces and sprinkle ashes mixed with water over their heads. They loosen their hair and injure their flesh with knives as they dance around the body.

This custom is slowly dying out in the cities, but in the villages it is strictly followed. Last year in a suburb of Alexandria the women were dancing round a dead body in a room on the second floor when the whole house collapsed, so that many were injured and one killed. This drew attention to the custom, and those in authority did their best to discourage its continuance.

Like all bad news, that concerning a death spreads rapidly through a village, and it is surprising how soon every friend and relative arrives at the house, especially the women. When the men arrive they touch the hands of the chief mourners saying: "It is the will of God." Then they take their seats and coffee is offered, always without sugar, followed by cigarettes or "hubble-bubbles." Very different are the women when they come. As soon as they reach the door they begin lamenting, while those inside answer with renewed outbursts. Sometimes this rivalry develops into an actual contest in sound.

The whole interior of the house is covered with black, and the frame of every photo is shrouded in black gauze. The picture of the deceased is completely covered, nor is it revealed again for a year or more. In some countries—for example, in Egypt —every mirror must be taken from the walls and shattered.

Professional wailing women are now called—or they will in any case come uninvited—to aid the mere amateurs. They bring little drums, which they beat as they dance around the dead. Whether he deserves it or not, they shout his praises, drawing upon their endless stock of glowing phrases. His good deeds are recounted, real and imaginary, and his courtesy, kindness, and generosity are lauded in most exaggerated terms. At intervals the rest of the women break into this recital with renewed shrieks. One very curious custom is that any of those present may call to mind their own dead and request the hired mourners to sing special verses in their praise, for which they pay a small extra fee.

The women continue thus until the corpse is removed, which must be done within twenty-four hours according to the law. No food is eaten in that period, but it is permissible to smoke cigarettes. For three days afterwards all food is brought to the house by friends, and no cooking takes place within the house of death.

In all these things it is the ancient primitive customs which are being observed, some of which date back to the early days of Egypt. None of these ceremonies is prescribed by either Muslim or Christian doctrine, and indeed the priests of both faiths do their best to discourage the more exaggerated of the proceedings. Lately after many efforts the worst features are being got rid of. It was once, for instance, the custom for women to follow the funeral procession wailing and crying, often barefooted and with dust or mud upon their heads. Now that is stopped and only men may accompany the body, walking in silence.

When the body is placed in the coffin it is strewn with flowers, and rose-water or other perfumes are sprinkled over it. Then the procession is formed, the priests in their black stoles holding up the cross and praying aloud. After them go the deacons, and then

comes the carpet of mercy, a large black cloth if the deceased is an old man or woman and white if the deceased is young. It is carried at the four corners by the closest friends of the family. The coffin was once always carried on the shoulders of male relatives, who handled the burden in turn, but now it is often borne by a horse-drawn carriage. If a young man is dead, however, it is usual for his friends to act as pall bearers. It has always been considered meritorious in the East to assist in the burial of the dead, and in the holy books it is stated that one of the first and most solemn duties of man is to give whatever aid he may in such matters.

In the church the coffin is laid upon a great slab of stone in front of the sanctuary while the service for the dead is recited. At the close the coffin is opened and the priest scatters dust upon the body, pronouncing that most dread and moving formula of the Christian Church: "From dust thou camest, and to dust thou shalt return." The corpse is then carried to burial.

After the return from the burial ground most of the mourners come to the house of the deceased to be served with a meal, all touching the hands of the chief mourners as a sign that this is the first time they have eaten since the death took place. For three days afterwards friends call to show silent sympathy and the priest comes to pray in the room of death, sprinkling holy water around the walls and thus "sending the soul away." They teach in Syria that certain prayers and offerings are necessary to ensure repose for the souls of the dead. The relatives therefore go to the place of burial and offer food to the poor. These gifts are known as "funeral alms," and for a whole year they are offered on stated occasions. After nine days a service is held at the church and at the tomb, and this is repeated on the fortieth day, and at

six months and a year. At these times the women express sorrow as before, striving, it seems, to re-open their wounds. The custom of paying special regard to the fortieth day after death is very old, and was practised centuries ago, before the Arab conquests.

During the whole year the women are forbidden to leave the house on any feast day unless to go to the burial ground, so they always go there, since any excursion is better than none. They must, of course, continue to wear black, and jewels must be laid aside. Any form of gaiety is frowned upon.

I have related these gloomy matters at some length because few people of the West realise the hold which death exercises upon the Eastern imagination, and how seriously it is regarded, whether by Christian or pagan. This feeling has not changed, but among the more enlightened women, especially in cities, the wild excesses are frowned on and the use of drums is considered barbarous. As it is what the West would call a "vested interest," the ritual still struggles to survive, and I found in several places during my travels that it had been thought necessary to form societies to teach the ignorant women to abandon their ridiculous funeral practices. In China there are similar societies aimed at discouraging expensive funerals, for it was not unknown for families to plunge terribly into debt rather than forgo the least detail of the elaborate ritual of ancient days.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY LAND

FROM Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, we made our way by motor-car, southwards through the Holy Land. It was at Haifa that I first realised the great changes which are coming to the East. In place of the picturesque but highly insanitary dwellings I remembered facing the sea, were rows of buildings in the best modern style, with a Customs House which seemed the last word in "functional" efficiency.

At a ramshackle shed labelled "GARAG" on the outskirts of the town an Arab brought water for the radiator of our car. I talked with him as he splashed it over the heated engine, chuckling delightedly as the steam hissed up from every drop. "You have a wonderful town growing here," I said. "In 1925 I saw none of this."

He spat upon the dust.

"Come here in 1945 and you may once more see none of this," he said.

One moment he was a child chuckling over a game with drops of water hissing into steam. Now he was suddenly darkly adult, his eyes flashing, concise and epigrammatic in his speech.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"We will sweep them back into the sea!" he said.

"But are you not prosperous since these buildings and all this trade came here?" I asked. "Will you not drive your prosperity into the sea?"

"Prosperity!"

He spat out the word.

"Well," I said, "do you not earn much more now than you once did?"

"Yes," he said, "but since I spend it what does it profit me?"

"But, surely," I persisted, "you have the things which you buy?"

"No," he said, "I do not."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"The things I buy do not last," he said simply, as though it were a conclusive condemnation of them.

"Do not last?"

"No—when my father saved a little money he bought a sheep—two sheep, and these bred—four, five, a dozen sheep. One killed a sheep, one ate it, but still there came more. But if I go to the café or to the shops in the town I have what I buy only a little while. I eat it or it wears and breaks. Anyway, it is gone, and my money too. They cheat us, these Jews. We will sweep them into the sea, I tell you. No one shall stop us. Not even Britain."

It is almost impossible to capture the idiom in which that Arab spoke. There were French and English words mixed with his native tongue. He was doing comparatively easy work, and getting what was, for him, good money, and yet he felt in some muddled way with instinctive, albeit incoherent, wisdom that the Jews were cheating him. Seeing that I was an Arab he had not scrupled to tell me his thoughts.

I have always remembered that conversation. In the light of what followed—the Arab insurrection, the weeks of guerilla warfare following the importation of English troops, that stumbling speech, with its queer logic, took on a special significance.

It is true enough that there is prosperity following the coming of the Jews. They are healthy, hard-working communities, and they are showing that given the opportunity the Jew can excel as a producer and does not always seek the role of financial manipulator or middleman. It seemed to me, as I

watched the splendid physical specimens, boys and girls, working in the orange groves of Jaffa, that the Jewish race was here, on the soil of its fathers, regaining some lost regions of its soul. The Arab is everything that the Jew is not. He is slothful, unprogressive, and seems often to love a quarrel for its own sake. He takes the benefits that the Jew brings and returns only hate. Having sold the plot of land to a Jew at a good price he spends the money unwisely, and then looks upon the new owner of the property as a thief who has cheated him out of his inheritance. He schemes how by violence he may regain that little plot of land which he has never ceased to regard as his own. And yet my sympathies are with the Arab. Why should a Western civilisation claim the right to set people to work on modern lines who are quite happy working on the soil which their fathers have tilled for centuries, and which has hitherto served their simple needs? Is sloth a crime, if the slothful are content and do no harm and do not seek to reap what they have not sown? Is it right to dazzle an ignorant Arab with money and get him to sign away his land even though the price be a fair one? Can any price be fair if its acceptance cuts off a simple soul from the soil which is the only way of life natural and proper to him? I make no charge against the Jews. Occasionally there has been sharp practice, but on the whole their standards of honesty have been high. Nevertheless, the net result of their coming was summed up by the inarticulate Arab who poured water everywhere save into the radiator while he uttered dark threats against the invaders of his land. When I saw the great dynamos which give light to the city and the suburbs I could picture the whole Arab world being ground into nothingness by these great mills of progress. It was an unhappy thought.

Jaffa is about sixty miles south along the coast,

but we made a detour inland to Nablus, thus increasing the length of our journey.

At Nablus we took refreshment in a small but excellently appointed rest house where "Kunafa," the local sweetmeat, was served to us. The molasses used in its preparation are obtained from a species of fig which grows upon the mountains. We were very tired, and found this sweet confection extremely refreshing. I suppose that the sugar is of a specially assimilable variety, so quick was its effect in revitalising the tired blood.

Soon we were on our way to Nazareth and to the Sea of Galilee, which lies twelve miles beyond.

Nablus, or Nebo, nestles among the hills, and from the peak above the town there is a magnificent panorama to be viewed. Strings of mules wound down the narrow passes, the drivers walking beside them shouting and singing to keep up their spirits in the eerie surroundings. At last, however, we were on the plains again and on a main road to our destination.

Nazareth lies on a gentle slope and consists of a haphazard cluster of white-walled, flat-roofed houses set at all angles and threaded by a maze of narrow lanes. From the distance it appeared that a number of oblong boxes had been thrown together at random. The town was far bigger than I had expected, and when the first impression of disorder had passed I realised that this very muddled appearance was in itself an indication of teeming economic life. The walled gardens were well tended, and for miles round every plot of cultivable land seemed to be thoroughly well tilled.

I would willingly write that the sacred associations of Nazareth thrilled through my mind at every step I took upon the holy ground. But the facts are otherwise. I did not feel the emotions which I had expected. In my mind were childhood pictures which imagination had formed out of the biblical stories, and they

were far more precious than the realities which now met my gaze. Only when the still grey waters of the Sea of Galilee lay spread out before us, scarcely rippled by a light wind from the dull green hills of the distance did any sense of kinship with the past flood upon my mind. But in the fading light I saw sails dipping sluggishly over a clumsy craft and heard a shout from a human voice thinned by diluting air till it was no more than a bird's cry, and the sound pierced my heart with knowledge that was of the blood rather than of the mind, so that tears came to my eyes.

Nearby was a ruined church with fragments of fallen archways curiously inscribed. Had we come upon these rich fragments of Early Christian life in their natural setting they would have possessed an indescribable beauty, for even in the guide book atmosphere of enclosures and modern brick walls they cried out in the gloom the message of a living past. I was glad that the dusk made thought and feeling easier, and even a German pastor, a righteous man but of over-obvious mind, did not break through my reverie by repeating in loud tones at brief intervals, "Think of it, think of it—these are the very waves our Saviour trod."

I had some good friends in Nazareth who knew my father and who made me and my brother welcome for the night. We rose early to see the waters of Galilee flashing gold and green in the rising sun. Then we set out once more southward, pausing at the Church of Saint Mary, where a priest pointed out to us the very stone beside a well on which the Virgin was seated at the time of The Annunciation.

"There sat the blessed Mother of God, and the Angel Gabriel, all white and gold, appeared here before her."

"How can you be so sure of the exact place?" I asked.

"By the mercy of God the fact has been handed down to us through all the years," said the priest. Then, as if to banish the doubt which was in my eyes he added quickly: "Besides, an Abbot saw it all done again in a Vision." That was conclusive evidence, and seeing that his words were effectual the priest commenced an interesting discourse on the antiquities of the place, offering to come with us personally to the Well of Jacob, at Shechem. This was a few miles further south, over a rather rough roadway. It was quite an ordinary well where another member of the Grecian Church was on duty winding a crude windlass by which an earthen vessel was hauled to the surface that bottles of the holy water might be filled for travellers. I gazed down the narrow shaft—it was very deep. The water was cold and pure. I sipped it reverently. Asking what I must pay, I found myself handed a picture of Christ with the woman of Samaria, after which the priests indicated an offertory box, turning away their eyes. I slipped what coins I thought necessary into the box—sufficient to ensure a well-meant blessing, and then, having bowed reverently to the two priests, my brother and I went on our way. The priest who had brought us would not hear of our turning back to return with him to Nazareth. God would see to that, he said. A mule cart would soon come this way. Seated in the car I looked at the picture of Christ. It was crude, ill-coloured and the product, I fancied, of some Turkish or Egyptian firm. I was to find afterwards that Palestine was flooded with such pictures.

Now we were on our way to Jerusalem. We crossed the great plain of Esdraelon which lies among the hills. Fertile, and frequently swampy, this region stretches to Mount Carmel where the climb began once more. There were now astonishing contrasts between the rugged barrenness of the slopes and chasms

and the rich beauty of the valleys. The air was warm and dry. Already there were signs that the summer season was about to burn up the exposed greenery. Great scarps of limestone reared up, white and shimmering in the noon heat. Beyond them were cavernous shadows. The roads were good, though of rather stony surface. We made a wide circle coastwards to Jaffa, and then went on to Jerusalem, which we reached comfortably before night.

It is impossible not to feel the mystery and wonder of Jerusalem. The whole city is one great shrine, and there are everywhere moving glimpses of the past. The narrow lanes between the leaning houses, the steps, the archways, the motley crowd, the strange cries and queer smells which the fierce sunlight seems to whirl into one confused impression of teeming life beat upon the mind of the traveller till it falters in awed bewilderment.

True, the purist among archaeologists sweeps aside nine-tenths of the relics as spurious and points out that there is not one grain of evidence connecting certain localities with the scenes which tradition, often fostered by commercial instincts, seeks to place there. Few stories offer more scope to the cynic than the record of how Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, seeking some task by which she might earn remission for her sins, which were doubtless many, set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem early in the fourth century, accompanied by wise men who were to decide where exactly all the chief events of Christ's life on earth had happened. Constantine himself followed up the activities of his mother and set in motion the great search for relics which is hardly yet abated. When an Emperor sets out on such a quest it must not be allowed to fail. The True Cross was discovered, the Holy Sepulchre revealed, and numerous other points of pilgrimage established. Ten

years later the first "guide book" appears, the work of an unknown Frenchman who sailed from Bordeaux and spent several years in the Holy Land. His credulous, but rather beautiful account of what he saw does not offend the intelligent mind, but with the passing of the years the record swells to ridiculous proportions, till it would seem that there is not one stick or stone in all Judaea which is not definitely linked to some incident of the Scriptures. The Scriptures being limited and the inventive powers of man unbounded, there soon comes a stage in which incidents in the life of Christ not to be found in the Bible are invented to fit any convenient spot, and by the end of the fifteenth century the catalogue of marvels has reached fabulous length. I made many enquiries among archaeologists, which convinced me, at length, that the only site on which all authorities are in reasonable agreement is the well at Shechem. There the Woman of Samaria gave Christ a cup of water and by that simple action won a place in the greatest story in the world. The more I heard of other shrines the more I clung to that moment at the well when I sipped the cool spring flow. That was real, that and the Sea of Galilee. All else seemed a mirage of the human mind.

Nevertheless I saw it all—though sight-seeing in the ancient city has to be done on foot since the narrow stone-made lanes do not allow of the passage of vehicles.

Walking through the Via Dolorosa, a winding street of many archways, so named in memory of Christ who went that way, carrying his Cross, to the place of Crucifixion, we visited the Greek convent, where we met the Patriarch, who greeted us kindly and deputed a member of his order to accompany us as guide. In the church of the Holy Sepulchre at this spot there is a special section belonging to each of the several Christian denominations. The Greeks

have the largest part of the church, but close by I saw the shrines of Catholics, Armenians and Copts.

Our priestly guide showed us the spot where Christ was buried, and the rock that is said to have split in two when He died; the vestments of the Patriarchs and their crowns, set and inlaid with precious stones; and the finger-bones of Saint Badelimon of the Greeks. In the section of the church belonging to the Catholics we saw statues of Christ and of the Virgin Mary, and the jewels and gifts offered to them by the kings of Europe and the various Popes. It was difficult to estimate the value of so rich a display of gems, in which diamonds abounded.

Close by is the Church of St. Jacob—who was the founder of the Jerusalem Order of the Patriarchs. The day of our visit happened to be the Patriarch's feast-day, and we attended service. About one hundred and fifty members—from different parts of Palestine—were present. We were very hospitably treated by the Order, and a few days later, on the occasion of my delivering some of my Arabic poetry to the Patriarch, he was pleased to decorate me with the Cross of Saint Sepulchre.

Our next visit was to the Haram-al-Sharif, which is variously known as the Mosque of Omar and the Dome of Rock. This is one of the most wonderful buildings in the world, and no traveller should feel content till he has seen it.

It is built on the site of Herod's Temple and the Temple of Solomon and covers the top of Mount Moriah, where tradition states that Abraham's sacrifice was offered and where the Altar of burnt-offering stood. The marble conduit that carried away the blood is still there, and can be clearly seen, as well as the hole in the rock beneath the altar down which the blood flowed!

The rock of Haram-al-Sharif is ascendable from all sides. In the days of Solomon sacrifices were made

upon it. It is 58 feet in length and 44 feet in width with a height of about 6 feet above the ground that surrounds it.

The most wonderful part of Haram-al-Sharif is the dome; but first a word must be given to the extraordinary construction of the mosque's pulpit, the "minbar," from which the Imam (Muslim priest) conducts the prayers. It was presented to the Mosque by Salah-el-Din-al-Ayoubi—the Great Saladin. It is of ebony and ivory and is so extraordinarily made that the joins are held in place without the help of nails; in fact, there is no nail or bolt in it.

It is a veritable gem of workmanship. Above is the great dome, its magnificence weighing upon the spirit. Massive in design, it is also massive in its detail, patterns of amazing colour and intricacy puzzling the eye and paralyzing the will to think. Ceiling and walls are rich in Eastern mosaic of the most gorgeous character, columns of marble so carved that they seem to writhe, rear up on all sides. Oil paintings complete the decorative scheme, but these struck me as interesting historically rather than as works of art. They certainly could not rank for one moment with the mosaic and the carvings. The Moslem mind, it would appear, does not turn to paint with such success as to the graving arts.

Close by the Mosque of Omar is the rock which Moslems call "Mirage." They say that it hung between earth and sky, and that the Prophet stepped upon it in his ascent to Heaven. As this was recounted to me by a friendly Imam I reflected on the close parallels which can be observed between the lives of Mohammed and Christ. The great strength of Mohammed was his faith in one God; his great weakness that he believed the sword might win men for the God he worshipped. Still meditating upon the future contacts of these great faiths which have warred with

such bitter hatred in the past, though often with a certain mutual respect, I was led to the Jama-al-Abessa, a Moslem shrine which was once a Greek church. I recognised this fact at once from the general plan, which seemed strangely foreign to my conceptions of Moslem architecture. Then, to my surprise, I saw the sign of the cross engraved upon a pillar. Knowing the hatred which that symbol has inspired in long generations of the Prophet's people, I turned to the Imam and asked why it was not removed.

"The appearance of the building would be harmed," he said. "The cross is carved too deep for easy erasure." He paused. "Besides, what is the harm? If it be false it is as nothing, and if there be any truth in it that man who lays hands upon it to destroy it does ill indeed."

These are the words of the Imam. In them I see the germ of tolerance, the first faint sign of the knowledge that there may be many ways to the throne of God.

What more shall I write of Jerusalem. . . .? The broad stream of the Jordan flowing between thick rushes in a desolate land, the village of Bethlehem where I supped with the bishop and talked of heresy, arguing far into the night with that saintly and charitably-minded father of the Church. . . . "Some heretics are better than others," he said, "just as some thieves, though they steal, do so with mercy and a kindly thought for their victims. But they remain thieves just the same. No, my daughter, when a man denies the true faith, though he lives an honest life he is for that reason all the more dangerous—just as a romantic robber of the hills will attract a youth to his sin who would never wish to emulate the dirty cut-throat of the alleys."

I said that some heretics had made enduring contributions to the storehouse of mankind. The bishop denied it. "It may indeed appear so, but

think, I beg you, of all the wicked follies which heretics have spread. You think only of a few men of strong character whose sin was pride in the lust of the mind. They seem to have stood for freedom, to have been brave. Some such quality I grant them, but consider a moment. Heresies are not few and noble—they are many and base. Of a thousand heretics of the past, each had some doctrine of his own which would have been poison had it spread. The Church prevented that infection from spreading —often by drastic means. But shall you call the surgeon cruel who saves with a cut of the knife? What will become of mankind if a multitude of idle counsellors each shouts his own theory of life. Only destruction can come from such chaos. It is to the Church mankind must turn—the Keepers of the one true faith."

I thought of Christ, himself a heretic in the eyes of the Sanhedrin, but courtesy, I felt, forbade such an utterance. Besides, I had respect for the wisdom of this calm and clear-thinking priest.

At Bethlehem is the grotto which Helena of Byzantium placed upon the very birthplace of Christ. Her act won no gratitude from me. Everywhere I sought for some authentic contact with the Christ I loved, and everywhere I was offered ornate shrines and relics and spurious legends. Yet sometimes, in unexpected flashes, Christ was there. On the dangerous and gloomy road to Jericho I saw Him, beside the pool of Siloam I saw Him stand on the stone steps, in the narrow street of Bethlehem beneath the narrow balconies of the crumbling houses, I saw a man run to help a laden brother and Christ standing nearby in a shadowy doorway smiled approval of the deed. Where they cried "Christ" He was not to be found, but in a hundred sudden instants of travel I saw Him, and it is for these moments that my journey to the Holy Land is a treasured memory to me.

CHAPTER V

TRANSJORDANIA

Lost in the desert wastes, I and my friend,
Our camels stolen by robbers, our water at an end,
Saw death draw near, a foe in hideous guise.
The sand tore at our flesh, the noon-fire of the skies
Burned in our blood-rimmed eyes.

All hope was gone, we saw the great sands roll,
Sweeping upon us, closing up the scroll
Of two lives more. Then said my friend to me:
"Soon we shall solve the last great mystery
Of Life and Death and the strange lands between,
Seeing all known things, ourselves unseen. . . .
Yet shall we dream as life's last siftings run,
Only of deep cool wells and shelter from the sun."

THE principality of Aman was the first place we visited in Transjordania. There we were privileged to meet his Highness Prince Abdulla, whom I had not seen since our previous meeting thirteen years before in Cairo when, during his visit to Egypt, I was his guest at dinner in Shepheard's Hotel. On that night he had inscribed his name in my album with a charming compliment. Now he said laughingly, "Give me your book"—and turning to the page on which he had signed he wrote: "Thirteen years later I still think the same!" once more adding his name. From the moment of our arrival he made us his guests.

During my stay in Aman, her Highness, the mother of Prince Talal, the heir apparent, made me promise to lunch with her every day in the palace, while Prince Abdulla extended a general invitation to my brother and me to join him and his guests at dinner every night.

The city of Aman is built on a hill. The houses are erected in the Western style, with no shutters

on the windows; everywhere are modern devices, but on the mountain sides opposite the city, are some caves in which Bedouins live in the most primitive conditions.

Aman of to-day was the Philadelphos of the ancient world. Now it is a city of varied ruins: an Abbasid mosque, a Byzantine basilica, the thermal baths of the Roman age. The theatre is in good preservation and the ruins of the great colonnade which once ran from it to the centre of the town can still be clearly seen. Rarely have I viewed a sight so easily reconstructed. One can live again in the fierce age of triumphal processions, of chariot wheels grinding through the dust, and victims perishing in the arena or on the public place of execution.

But I was also interested in the modern town. There are now several schools for boys in Aman, and some little attention is paid even to the education of girls. These schools were opened by his Highness the Prince Abdulla. Until seven years ago only a few existed, and not a single one for girls. It used to be considered shameful to educate females, a view still held in other oriental countries. The Prince has, however, done away with that idea, and has, moreover, engaged specially-trained teachers from among the more progressive Arab lands. There is a hospital and dispensary in Aman. "But better than these," said the Prince one day, "is our healthy climate." There is also a national newspaper called *Al-Urdun*, and its chief policy at present is the enlightenment of the public concerning the new form of Government they are enjoying under the leadership of the Prince; but there is one difficult point which is almost sure to lead to trouble soon. Not only in Aman but throughout Transjordania there appears to exist a strong prejudice against allowing Jews to settle.

Many and most enjoyable were our conversations with the Prince.

His Highness recalled with pleasure the happy time we had spent in Egypt, and asked particularly after Russell Pasha, of whose great work against the drug trade he had heard so much. Then he called his A.D.C., a charming and highly cultured man, and gave instructions that there was nothing in his territory closed to me, and that I must see everything I wished.

We therefore made a start the following day and saw the huge amphitheatre, a relic of Roman luxury and grandeur. Transjordania is a strange land, having been sometimes a furious battlefield, sometimes a backwash of quiet prosperity amid a world at war. The Greek colonisers were displaced by the Romans, and following the decay of that great empire there came a period when the territory had comparative freedom until the rise of Islam set the Arabs on the move. Then Jarash, the largest city of the region, fell to the invaders, who never exercised a very strong hold upon it. Jews seem to have found sanctuary there in large numbers, and to have restored its waning prosperity, but an earthquake laid waste the whole country in the eighth century A.D., and what little was left the Crusaders destroyed for the glory of the Prince of Peace. The temple of Artemis still remains in Jarash, and in the rooms beneath its columns are examples of mosaic work the equal of which I have rarely seen.

One day when I returned very tired with much study of the place her Highness the Princess said to me, "You try to do too much, be guided by me. See, this afternoon you shall stay and gossip with me—and I will teach you a lovely game."

She was as good as her word. After a delicately cooked meal she produced the counters and taught me "Bargis," which is something like chess in theory but is played with shells and cubes on a piece of

black velvet shaped like a cross. I was not very good at the game, I am afraid, and often the Princess would take over my hand when I was playing a friend of hers. Whenever she did this she always won, and so became convinced that I always brought luck to her. "Give me your picture when you go," she said, "I want to have you always at my side when I play Bargis."

Another day I paid a visit to Petra, the rose red city of the East. Almost I will swear there is nothing more beautiful in the world. Tombs, dwellings, palaces, all are hewn from the rose and purple rocks of the cliffs. Through a deep gorge we caught sight of the great temple, all rose-red in the sunlight and having upon its walls and graceful columns fantastic carvings—winged war maidens, Arab war horses, and dancers urging themselves to the fury of battle.

What is the secret of Petra?

Few dare guess. That it is Egyptian seems clear enough and there is some evidence that the temple was dedicated to the Egyptian goddess of fertility and agriculture. The amphitheatre with thirty-three tiers of seats could accommodate at least 3,500 people, and its arena is 120 feet long. Without going into detailed archaeological theory, I want to say that I am not satisfied that the culture so ably depicted by the artists of this rock miracle is to be so quickly dismissed as Egyptian. I detected traces of an altogether foreign art in some of the engravings. It would be over-definite were I to say that there seemed to me to be a hint of the Chinese element in some of the designs, and I should be rightly ridiculed. Nevertheless, I who am steeped in the atmosphere of Egypt, where I have lived many years, instinctively felt an alien touch in Petra, and the belief came to me, as I gazed at the amazing scene, that here may lie a clue to some

fusion of primitive cultures which will link up the distinct original civilisations of mankind.

Sitting on the terrace in the evenings the Prince would talk of his plans for the improvement of the people and the territory. The Ailvun Mountains have a perfect climate, and the noble oak-clad slopes offer perfect sites for houses. "An ideal position for a group of sanatoria," said the Prince. "Or a few hotels. I am trying to encourage the people to spend the summer months up there on the slopes of the mountains. Our rich merchants go and waste their money in the Casinos. I want to teach them to consider the planting of an orchard the purest pleasure for a man. Tourists have only to learn of the beauties of Transjordania to include it in every itinerary of the East."

One day we went with the Prince among the tribesmen. They had come into the town from the hills and plains, each local sheik bringing with him a band of followers. All had black beards and long hair, and the lean hunter's look in the eye. Each carried his ancient rifle, probably inherited from his father, and their cartridges were often worn almost as ornaments upon their persons. Some had close upon a hundred brass cartridges exposed to view when their Abbaias of woven camel-hair swung open. In their rough belts they wore curved daggers, each of a different pattern, and the restrained ferocity which their gait and gestures implied was more disturbing than any blatant savagery.

When the Prince held audience they sat in a circle upon the floor paying empty compliments to each other as they sipped their sweet coffee. When the coffee was drunk they gravely exchanged cigarettes, but even in this they all seemed guarded and expectant of treachery. When the meal was ordered to be brought I was allowed to eat with them, for they were told I was a poetess in the tradition of the great

singers of Arabia, and felt it no dishonour to sit with a woman whom they could see was the friend of their Prince. Nevertheless they gave me curious glances.

A sheep had been roasted whole as an act of hospitality, and I had watched it cooking over a slow wood fire. It was a day of baking heat, but none were disconcerted, and I could see that they were looking forward to a large scale meal. Sweet water, with the coolness of the earth from which it had lately been drawn still upon it, was brought in great jars and handed to all who asked. Now the meat was put before us piled high with rice on a large tray and we were invited without more ado to gather round and help ourselves.

We ate with our fingers, and sometimes as a mark of intimacy and good breeding handed some choice morsel which we had detached to our neighbour, who would soon make an opportunity of returning the compliment. I had many times supped with Arabs at the oases of my own country, and I found that the etiquette here was quite similar, so that my brother and I acquitted ourselves without error. As appetites were satisfied tongues were loosened, and soon there was talk of policy. All were as one in their hatred of the Jews and of France, while they spoke of Great Britain with caution. Britain was strong. She was all-powerful in Egypt and Arabia on the one hand and in India on the other. Their knowledge of the map was vague, but they all had a feeling that Britain ringed them round. Was it true, I was asked, that the King of Britain was a Jew? That would explain, of course, the action of her officials in everywhere slighting the claims of the Arab and advancing those of the Jew. "The Jews have money," said another. "They have bought the throne of England," said a third. What could I do to counter such statements? I did my best. "Britain is just," I said.

"You need have no fear." There was a silence. "Yes, Britain is just"—said another, an older man who had been hitherto most silent—"but only in small things. They pay each man what they owe him. If a soldier takes one hair of your camel there will be payment, good payment, made. Indeed, if you are subtle [and state your case well, it may be that you will be paid for the whole camel. . . . Ah yes, do not laugh, in the time of war I have known such things. Britain is just in small matters, but in great you can put no trust in them. While they are paying you recompense thrice over for a stolen sheep they may be stealing all your land. . . . I have known Sheiks who were the same," he added meditatively.

That was a long speech for an Arab. It was greeted with the long silence it deserved. For myself I was amazed at the shrewdness of the old man's thought. For a while I did not follow the conversation, of which I could make no sense. Then I caught the name Saladin, and realised with a start that they were discussing the Crusades. Slowly it was borne upon me that for these men the Crusades were the history of yesterday.

The talk shifted now to the three topics on which the desert Arab wages endless discussion—camels, horses, and the hunt. Hunting men are the same the world over, and with just a few changes of terminology I have no doubt that the whole conversation could have been transferred to a London club. I had naturally no part in these matters, though my brother was questioned concerning the rules of racing in Egypt. After a while it dawned upon them that I was neglected, but so excellent was their breeding that they did not rush to make obvious converse with me, but quietly drew me into the circle by referring first to a poem about the horse and thence to the poems which they had heard that I had written At their request I declaimed a few verses in praise of the hills, after

which the senior of the Sheiks said that since I had praised the hills so finely they should praise me. To-morrow I must come to his village, where on a high rock my name should be engraved. Truly Arabs of the plains are a strange people. Cruel, brave, wise, childish, born aristocrats, born villains—how shall one describe them? And they are one moment crudely practical and at the next sheer poets. What more can I say than that if their blood flows in my veins I am proud of it.

I went to the village on the following day and a feast was held much like the other. We rode back through the moonlight, which made all the distance silver. Only the hoofbeats broke the silence, save that from time to time a village dog would bay the moon or some prowling creature of the vastness would give a brief thin cry or low snarl. I slept heavily, but woke in the redness of dawn to hear the cocks crying out to greet the day and a high clear voice from a minaret calling the faithful to prayer. It was a lovely sound. I wondered what the muezzin must feel alone on his glittering mosque, calling all the clean and sun-drenched world of the desert to the worship of the One God. One day, some time later, when I had come to a Christian village I was wakened to the sound of church bells and realised, after a moment of disappointment, for I had been unconsciously listening for the muezzin's cry, that the voice of the bells had the same message.

We made many expeditions, travelling for days at a time across the desert. Sometimes a file of Bedawin would pass us, riding easily and with a stately negligence, their rifles slung across their shoulders. Always they would greet us in the name of Allah, and their keen eyes would follow our movements as they swerved from our path. Sometimes they would be driving a herd of camels, who would show signs of fright at our

car. Only once were curses railed upon us, and then by a man of mixed, uncertain blood. At every desert station we were offered hospitality, and even the desert police, when their enquiries were concluded, never failed to offer coffee of the bitter Bedawin kind.

Sometimes in the rush of London, where I am writing these words, a longing for the desert has come upon me with overpowering force. When the mind is fretted by the swarming non-essentials of civilisation to have known a region of the earth where existence was stripped to its simplest terms enabled the spirit to seek in memory a few moments' respite from the trials of the city day. There was one place to which my heart returned. Its name I have forgotten, if indeed it had a name in the mapmakers' sense of the word, but it lay just where the spurs of the hills rose from a blazing desolation of whitish sand. Hidden between two rocky barriers was a stretch of green land where hundreds of camels grazed in peace. Outside a tent three women, babies slung upon their backs, bent over their cooking fire in preparation for their menfolk's return. Beasts and humans wore that same look of utter content, and the brown-skinned children slept so beautifully it was easy to believe that for just one hour their souls had slipped back to the heaven they had so lately quitted. We went up the valley slowly, allowing the verdant quietude to sink with healing touch into our sun-dazed minds. Now there were trees on the hills, and huts around which small garden plots showed even greener than the herbage. The valley widened, and a village of mud huts was before us. We sank to rest on a green bank close by an open door. An Arab woman was baking flat loaves of native bread in an outdoor oven. Slowly she strolled towards us, bearing a few loaves as a gift. Behind came her young daughter with a jar of water. A neighbour, not to be outdone in kindness, came with

cool cucumber and sun-ripened fruits. While we ate they sat cross-legged before us, clearly eager for gossip with those from a distant world.

"Is it true," asked one, "that in the great cities you can buy bread baked already?"

I answered that this was so.

"Flour I knew one might buy—but bread, ready baked—is that possible?"

I gave my word.

"And cakes made with raisins, like the soldiers have—can these be bought?"

"Yes, I can assure you, and many other things."

"Then my uncle did not lie when he returned from his journey. It is true that all things can be bought?"

"Yes, that is the simple truth."

There was a pause.

"Then tell us," said one, "what is it that the women do?"

But I fear my explanations were not satisfactory. They could not understand how, when the necessities of life were purchased without toil, there could be any other duties for the ladies of the house.

"Truly the women of the cities live like princesses," said one.

"Where does the money come from?" asked another.

"From their husbands," I answered.

"That is strange. Our husbands give money only to women of shame at the time of the great feasts. To us they give none."

Now was a chance to urge my feminist propaganda, but I had sufficient sense of proportion to keep silent. These women were happy, and it was useless to sow discord among them. Besides, sitting in that desert paradise, I could not really believe that the women of the cities were better off than these.

Looking at the village more closely I saw that only a few of the huts were unguarded, and that most lay

within a mud wall. Beyond was a green hill. "I would love to climb to that summit," I said.

A few moments later two horses were brought.

"Why have you fetched these horses?" I asked.

"They are sure of foot. You can trust them on the paths up the hill."

My wish had been uttered without any thought that it would be gratified, but to these desert dwellers the lightest wish of a guest, if it lay within their power to gratify it, had the force of law.

So we went to the summit and saw a panorama of a breadth and simplicity of line that brought fresh vigour to my heart and limbs. And later in the day, at another village we were entertained with songs that seemed to echo with the great distances of plains and hills. Here I saw some children of astonishing fairness, their skins being clear white and their hair a dark brown flecked with gold.

"The captives of Saladin," said an old man to whom I spoke of this matter.

For a moment I did not understand him. Then I realised that he was telling me that in the time of the Crusades there were Christian captives whose blood had left its mark upon the desert race.

"Have you any Christians to-day?" I asked. "Oh yes," he answered, "a few." From further questions I gathered that they were mostly of the Greek Orthodox Church. He did not like them. I said that I was a Christian. "But you are different," he said. "You laugh and jest and tell stories like one of us. You are joking when you say you are a Christian."

I took an oath that I was not joking.

"See," I said, "I make the sign of the cross to assure you I speak the truth."

"Ah yes," he said, "the cross. And what is it that they say?"

"Father, Son and Holy Ghost," I answered.

"Yes, that is right. You are a Christian sure enough."

"No," cried one who had overheard, "that cannot be. Last night 'The Lady whose words are as Song' told us an Arab story concerning the Caliphs of the great days."

"True," I said, "a good story is a good story, whether it be of Believer or of Giaour. I could tell you a Christian story if you wished. It is all one to me."

"Yes, tell us a Christian story," they laughed, all gathering round. It was clear that for some reason the idea pleased them hugely.

"You must listen carefully," I said, "for there will be things in this tale strange to you. And first my friend here will explain to you the sign of the cross and the words that Christians utter, for without that knowledge you will not understand the tale."

That was soon done.

"We understand," they cried, "we have seen it for ourselves. The story, tell us the story."

"It is brief," I said, "and concerns a Judge as witty as he was just. He lived in my own native country—Lebanon. Though I have been long in Egypt, it is there that my heart is rooted. It is a land much like your own, though the trees are taller."

"The trees are taller . . .?"

"Peace, brother—let us hear the story."

And so at noon on a grassy slope of the Ailvun Hills I told the Arabs my tale.

Now it chanced that among the Christian people who dwelt in the shelter of Mount Lebanon there was a son whose father dwelt in his house with him, a man of ripe age, weighed down with infirmities as well as the burden of years. The house was built beneath the hill and all was well in the upper storys, but beneath there were damp rooms, the result of

much dank dripping from the rains, that coursed down the slopes, moistening all the heavy soil.

Now the son and father shared one of the upper rooms and all was well until the young man took a wife. She being younger and proud—eager to show what strong dominion she exercised upon her husband and jealous of the knowledge of women which the old man showed (for he had been several times married and was well fitted to warn his son against the trickery of a wife) demanded with tears and with anger and with all manner of abuse and knife-edged phrases, that the father should be sent to the lower rooms that they, the husband wife, might live in peace in the well-appointed upper chambers.

So the old man was eventually sent down to the dank-walled dungeon-looking rooms below where his bones were racked with rheumatics and his lungs and throat with a cough such as though a thousand knives were tearing at the inner part of the body. For a while he strove for the sake of peace to bear his wrongs, but at last, being of the opinion that since his days on earth were limited to few, it was right he should spend them if not in comfort at least not in torture, he made complaint to the magistrate who dealt justice to all.

Thus on a certain day the son was summoned to justify his conduct. But he swore that his father was well fed and clothed, and that his complaints of his damp dwelling were but the crochets of age, and as such ought to be disregarded.

"Well," said the magistrate," there is perhaps some truth in what you say. You claim that your father has no right to the upper part of the house?"

"Most assuredly," said the son, fear of his wife's tongue goading him to boldness.

"You swear it?"

"I do."

"Then cross yourself as you swear."

This the son did—repeating as he made the signs: "Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

The magistrate eyed him keenly.

"Again," he commanded.

Much puzzled, the son did as he was bid.

"Worthless fellow," cried the magistrate as if in anger," are you then so pagan that you cannot perform the sign of the cross in proper fashion?"

The son completely staggered, knew not what to say.

"In truth," he stammered, "I never knew that I was at fault in this."

"Indeed you are—and most gravely," replied the magistrate. "When you say 'Father' you lay your hand upon your breast and when you say 'Son' you place your hand on the ribs beneath. Surely you should know that by right the gesture should be reversed?"

"But no, your honour," says the man, "always 'the Father' is above 'the Son'."

The magistrate looked severe.

"Unworthy boy," he said, "how comes it that though in the most sacred sign of your faith 'the Father' is above 'the Son' nevertheless in your house you presume to order things differently? For you to make the sign of the cross is blasphemy. Go to your home—see to it that in your house the father is above the son, or never dare again to make the sign of the cross."

"Another story," shouted my listeners as I finished, —"tell us another tale." So once again I began to relate a story told many times among the tribes near the place of my birth.

Now it chanced in the days of the great kings there was a ruler of the country around Mount Lebanon who was a subtle reader of men's minds so that the truth was not to be hidden from him at the judgement

seat. And there came a day when two who had once been friends were brought before him, the one of whom stated that a year before he had lent fifty pounds to the other on word of mouth alone. But this man most vehemently denied the debt, saying that he had accepted no such loan.

"Tell me then," said the monarch to the first speaker, "where and in what language was this thing done?" And the complainant gave full details, stating that it was on a certain road and beneath a certain tree after he had drunk wine in honour of his daughter's birthday that the loan had been made.

"What say you?" asked the ruler of the accused. "Does he speak truth?"

But the man swore by the One True God that all this was lies, and that he knew of no such tree, nor had ever been there.

Now all the officials of the court who were listening said: "There is no way in which this case can be decided, for witnesses are lacking and the word of one man of good standing is of equal worth to that of another. What then will our ruler do?"

For a while the king pondered. Then, turning in anger to the accuser, he said. "Villain, I see the black wickedness of your heart that you bring false charges against your friend. But God shall be your Judge. If what you say is true then God will have made a record of the transaction. Go to the tree of which you speak and dig deep into the earth. If you are a righteous man there shall you find a white stone. Your eyes will see no writing upon it, but when you bring it to me I shall see inscribed clearly the evidence of the loan. For God is not to be cheated, and all things are written as they occur."

And when the man was gone the ruler proceeded to try other cases, having ordered that the accused should remain in the court the while. At length all

was done and the accuser had not returned. Then the king sighed wearily and said to the man before him, "Of a truth I am sick of your trivial disputings. See, he who accused you has not returned. I think you are conspiring to make game of me and are affronting the dignity of the law, which is of God. Truly I am minded to fine you both heavily and dismiss this stupid case from my mind."

But the other pleaded that his ruler might have patience.

"Did not your officers go with the man?" he pleaded. "Of a certainty he must return. But the way is long and the earth beneath that tree is hard to dig in. . . ."

"Base liar," roared the king, "how comes it you said but this hour ago that you knew of no such tree. If you have lied in this I perceive that you have lied in all things. Bring in the accuser that he may receive his loan with interest, and as for this man let him be given fifty lashes that he may never dare again to lie to his king."

Then the officers brought in the plaintiff, who all now saw had never left the precincts of the court, and it was understood then that the monarch's talk of trees and stones on which was the invisible writing of the Lord was but a subtle trap to catch a villain —at which all marvelled at the wisdom of the king, nor would any lie to him from that day forth.

"Truly a wise king—tell us more of his wisdom," they clamoured.

And so I told yet another tale.

Now this same ruler of whom I have already spoken was a stern man, nor could he tolerate the presence of men of ill-intent in his service. Especially did he value the good moral standards among his officers, and he was severe beyond all measure to any who did ill to a woman, either by force or by guile.

When the day came that those who had been sent to collect the taxes were presenting their accounts to the king he would question them concerning the feelings of the people towards the throne—and though all vied one with the other in devising compliments, their ruler knew when they spoke the truth.

It happened that a certain handsome officer had once been suspected of wrong doing in which a woman was concerned, but the evidence had been uncertain and the king, who though severe was a just man, had pardoned him, saying that if he were guilty time would show. This officer now returned from the provinces, and when his totals had been approved the king said to him as was his custom: "Did you find any sign that the people love me, or any sign that they do not? Answer me truthfully."

And the officer said: "Lord, there was sent to me one sign of your high place in the trust and affections of your people, and it is with joy that I relate it to you. In a certain lonely spot I found a comely woman at work upon her vines. And I said to her, 'Is any with you?' To which she answered, 'Yes, my king is with me.' What higher proof than this can you have that you are trusted and loved as a defender of the poor?"

But the king frowned heavily and said, "See you not what else your story proves? How came you to ask the woman: 'Is any with you?'—unless it were that you had a mind to do evil towards her? Now do I truly see that the charges once made against you were justified. If I pardoned you that day it was because I was sure that with time the truth would be revealed. Go from my presence, and suffer the fate which the law prescribes."

So they hanged the handsome young officer who had designs upon women, and before he died he confessed many such crimes. Thus was the wisdom

of the king made known to all his people, who never ceased to praise his name.

There is much that could be told of those happy days in Transjordania. There are the stories of the old woman of one hundred years who told my fortune, saying that the day would come when all the world would listen to my songs. She would not believe that I was a Christian since she had met some many years before and knew that it was forbidden to them by their God to eat with their hands. "They picked up their meat with the point of a knife," she said. "How barbarous and disgusting! How dangerous to one's neighbour! Nor did they offer good pieces one to the other. They could not, you see, or they would have cut the mouths of their friends with the knives while trying to poke the food in. I told their fortune for them. 'He who eats with a knife,' I said, 'by the knife he shall be eaten.' And it came true, yes, before three months had passed. Some robbers slew them all, right out in the middle of the sands. My son, it was, now in Paradise, who found their bodies. . . . No, it was my grandson . . . but no matter. They were both good lads, though the robbers killed them too."

Another grandson, himself a venerable man and a philosopher, was still alive. He gave us fried eggs and buttermilk and talked of a vision he had seen. "I saw a mosque of white marble built among these hills," he said, "and a great people praying before it. Tell that to your friend the Prince when next you see him. It is a good omen."

I think a clairvoyant strain must have run in the blood of that family for all their neighbours attached great weight to their words. As I was about to leave the seer beckoned me to come to his private tent. There I saw a row of rifles, some of old pattern, but all shining. "Tell them in the city I am ready to defend the frontier when the time shall come."

The day came when we must wish Prince Abdulla good-bye. Presenting ourselves at his tent, which was pitched before his palace, we found that he was entertaining his chiefs to a feast of more than usual magnificence. With his brother, King Ali, beside him, he greeted all his guests, and presented me to those with whom I was unacquainted. They were seated on small stools covered with camel hair. Some were spread with rugs of native pattern, and one of these King Ali spread for me with his own hands. After this I had no lack of honour from the chieftains, and the head of them all brought me another rug with the most courteous of Bedawin salaams.

The main dish was now served, not on a tray but in a great copper cauldron. At a sign from the Prince we rolled up our sleeves and began. It had taken five men to carry that cauldron, but it did not take us long to empty it. There were, I think two whole sheep in that stew with a great pyramid of rice and curry, and a great jar of melted butter, boiling hot, was poured over it all before we fell to. On top of the pile were placed the heads. These are not eaten, but it is a mark of courtesy to your guests to display them as a sign that all the sheep has been served and that nothing is held back. It is a great sin against hospitality to withhold anything, especially the fat of the tails.

The speed with which they ate was amazing, and I knew that good manners demanded that I should eat in like fashion. Each took a handful of rice and squeezed it into a ball and literally flung it into a wide open mouth. In a few minutes the empty cauldron was removed. Now came two servants with a bowl of scented water in which we washed our right hands, which naturally needed it badly. Afterwards coffee was served.

Outside the tent another feast for the dependants

was in progress, and a whole line of cauldrons was emptied. Truly that was a great day. Children as well as grown ups surrounded the cauldrons, and more and more was brought, till every member of the community pronounced that the point of satisfaction, not to say saturation, had arrived.

When the time came for us to leave we were showered with kindnesses and gifts. Her Highness charged me when next I was in Iraq to convey her greetings to her sister, who is the queen. Prince Abdulla asked that we should think of him doing his duty at his somewhat lonely post when next we sat upon the terrace of Shepheard's Hotel, Cairo, with smart dresses and white shirt fronts everywhere and the rhythm of a dance band in our ears.

"Not that I long for such things," he said, "I have work to do here, and there is nothing in the world a man can get more pleasure from—but those were good days in Cairo. Something of my heart I think I left in your land." And as we were leaving on our journey he took me aside.

"I want you to try and dream of this city as it once was," he said. "You are a poetess. Write me a poem about Aman when it was in all its glory. Write me a poem of the Temple of the Sun which you see in ruins yonder and which was once a great structure of five hundred pillars."

That poem has yet to be written, for travel leaves little time for such work; but often the ruins of ancient Philadelphos come before me in memory, truly a worthy theme for song.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAND OF THE CALIPHS

TRANSJORDANIA, Mount Lebanon, Syria, and now Iraq. We left Aleppo for Mosul by the Taurus express. This was luxury travel, for the coaches, which bore the name of a well known German company, were beautifully fitted and ran smoothly over the shining metal track across waste land and sands. The country passed us by in a steady panorama of low, untidy hills of brown, with stony sides and here and there a clump of greenery or a village tucked among them. The houses were often strangely cone-shaped with small doors. The inhabitants, nonchalant Arabs, stared without great interest as we thundered past. And so we came to Nisibin, the frontier town, from where we were to motor to Mosul.

Our driver was waiting, and without long delay we thrust our light luggage into the back of the heavy Nash saloon and told him to proceed. He let in the clutch with a startling suddenness and trod upon the accelerator as though it were a venomous snake he wished to kill. We shot almost into the air across the sandy roadway, and our baggages tumbled about our ears. Heedless of my brother's remonstrances the driver shook his hair into the whistling wind and broke into song to a rhythm of seventy miles an hour. The landscape flashed past like a film run wild. Then all at once it was stationary, and I saw we were at rest before a white-walled police post and that officials were approaching us. Our passports having been scrutinised and pronounced in order it was now the driver's turn. He cheerfully produced various papers but I saw at once that something was wrong.

"You cannot go forward," said the policeman at last. "Your driver's papers are not in order." He paused and glanced once more at the offending documents. "No, no," he said, as if immensely shocked, "they are certainly not in order. I detect in them disorder of the utmost graveness."

In view of our driver's conduct at the wheel I was not surprised to find that his dossier reflected the disorder of his temperament, but it was difficult to know what to do, since Kamashlich, the point of our halt, though it boasted an hotel of reasonable comfort, offered no chance, it seemed, of car hire. Dusk was falling, and problems are ever made worse by the onset of darkness, which always when you are in a strange place seems to paralyse the will to think ahead.

So we got out in a dazed fashion while the policeman, his brown face shining above his equally lustrous brass buttons continued to mutter, "Bad, oh very bad indeed. By the beard of the Prophet, bad, bad, bad." The driver, whose untidy hair stuck out from under his fez, immediately dumped our belongings at the roadside, spun round the car as though it were a polo pony "turning on a dime," and sped away into the darkness, tooting in disgust. The last glimpse of him which I got by a chance lantern on a white wall, showed him leaning out and spitting with gusto at a speed which one would have thought necessitated at least a casual glance from time to time at the road ahead.

Having seen the last of the disorderly papers, the policeman showed us great kindness, and on my brother informing him (in answer to official enquiry) that I was a poet, begged me to recite my verses to him. So there in the gathering dark I declaimed a few stanzas for which a whole audience of police, some dozen in number, immediately gathered. Then, like an Homeric bard of old I was led in triumph to the hotel.

Here is the ballad they liked the best—making me repeat it several times.

A BALLAD OF DEATH AND THE MERCHANT

"Good merchant in the market place,
Why art Thou pale of face?
You sell, and none will buy?
Your dealings go awry?

"You mount your camel in such haste
The saddle bags hang down unbraced
I bid you stay—I am your friend.
If any press you I will lend."

"Nay, I have money and my trade thrives well,
Yet terrible the thing that I must tell.
In yonder alley where the chargers bide
I saw Death at my side!

"If he should ask where I am gone,
Your lips be tight as morticed stone.
Now loose me, there are leagues of shifting sand,
Which must be crossed e'er I reach Samarkhand."

"How now, Sir Death, whom are you seeking here?"

"A slave, a beggar, and a Grand Vizier—
But tell me—who was he you spoke with there?"

"Only a travelling merchant—no friend of mine, I swear."

"Truly my eyes did wrong. Me thought I spied
Abu, the camel-dealer, at thy side?"
"No, no, Sir Death, my oath it was not he."
"Nay, I believe you—for how could it be,
Since I have rendezvous to clasp his hand
To-morrow, at high noon, in Samarkhand."

"May you travel with all the grace and swiftness of your verses," said, the chief, holding open the door.

I am told that every foreign actress who visits London never leaves without saying, "I think your policemen are wonderful," but are they, I wonder, as wonderful as that?

Our new driver was less exuberant, and landed us in Mosul after five hours of continuous travel which he seemed to think all in a day's work. Mosul was not

impressive. There is a great shortage of stone in Iraq, and even important buildings are constructed without much use of it. In Mosul there seemed to be many narrow and winding lanes of mud walled houses, a few desolate looking mills, and beyond them the broad grey surface of the Tigris with dreary acres of mud and marsh along its banks. Entering the town our driver paused to point across the river: "Nineveh," he said, "there lies Nineveh."

It is amazing how a single word can transfigure a scene. That use of the present tense seemed to destroy time. Nineveh. Yes, over there it lay. Towers and temples, chariots, and horsemen, kings riding forth to war or to the chase of the lion. I looked no longer upon the modern decadence, but gazed enthralled upon a brilliant and burning past. The charm of Iraq lay upon me. I felt that the very earth I trod upon was made rich by long contact with the feet of conquerors, that it was old in its dealings, with men. Sargon, Kammurabi, Tiglath-Pileser. . . . Sumerians, Hittites, Medes, Greeks, Parthians, and Caliphs. . . . Here was the very dawn of empire in this now desolate land.

A moment after this sudden flash of vision we were at the Carlton Hotel, symbol of another empire, the rule of cosmopolitan luxury which spreads wherever money goes and has the same fundamental principles wherever it is found. The Carlton Hotel is a good hotel, no discredit to its famous prototype if allowances are made for locale. There in the first moments of our arrival we met the Governor Tahseen Beyel Asskari. At once we were bidden to dinner, and were told that we were to leave all details of our itinerary in the neighbourhood to the care of our host. So the next day we started out for the Imadyat Mountains, the governor, his wife, and a lady friend of hers accompanying my brother and myself. Our course lay across high, barren lands, where the danger lay in robbers or

wild beasts. The lion is no longer seen in these regions, but the cheetah is found; and there are men more cruel than this. So in an advance car went a bodyguard of six soldiers, a car load of provisions following, while we came last.

The country showed more variety than I had expected for though the mountains were barren the bright light of the sun brought out fantastic shades of yellow, red and brown, while here and there a narrow waterfall splashed down into a stony river bed. There were several rivers of fair size, but they had an air of impermanence, and were clearly dependent upon sporadic rainfall. The land was waste for mile after mile and the only vegetation thorn and scrub which the villagers burn, so rare is wood; yet here and there we passed Chaldu and Assyrian villages, where we were greeted respectfully, but with dignified salutation rather than obeisance. Trees were scarce, but we stopped for lunch under a high pine—"King Feisal's tree," for he had rested under it during a royal progress and given it his name. I said we were taking a great liberty to rest there ourselves, so to show that we were loyal to our royal fellow traveller we called on the local police officer to hoist the national flag upon the tree branches. This he did with great enthusiasm, for Feisal was beloved of his people; and our patriotism was almost immediately rewarded, for with the flag the officer brought a gift of chickens, eggs and cheese. I could write much of that journey into the hills, which were richer in pines than any other part of the land. The governor told me how he had laboured to make the afforestation successful, and how he had journeyed to Mount Lebanon in search of seed.

We passed the two strange villages of Araden—Christian Araden on the hill, Mohammaden Araden in the valley below. Halfway between these villages,

to show preference for neither, the King Feisal built a summer residence. When they heard that their King would spend a month of the year among them all the inhabitants turned out voluntarily for road making, Christians and Muslims working together, even the women lending a hand. That story has become a legend, symbolising the unity Feisal brought to his scattered people.

To the traveller who seeks the flagrantly picturesque, Iraq does not offer much, at least at first sight; but to those who would feel the real spell of the East, of that strange region where the desert lies just beyond the town, this country repays the adventure of a visit. I recall especially a halt we made at a hillside monastery, walled and palisaded, with small arched windows in the neat mud structure, and a grey flat roof. The monks brought us strange, bitter tea and gifts of sweetmeats and fruit, the result of laborious culture in unpromising soil. Then we were rested at the guest house where the Assyrian Archbishop joined the governor at dinner. Somehow I felt that in these surroundings faith had a meaning of which we lose sight in the distraction of town life. The Archbishop spoke to me so simply of the mystic world of belief and what joys awaited the mind willing to travel those arduous journeys of the spirit towards the very gates of God, that I said farewell to him with a heart uplifted and a mind made clear. The mountains and the wasteland became symbolic of material existence, and the strong green pines of Iraq spoke of the joyous growth of the soul by faith in God.

That night I lay awake in the upper room of the guest house with stars gazing at me through the glassless window and a bitter wind sweeping down from the hills. There was a calm and a purity there which was balm to my spirit. I awoke refreshed beyond measure, unharmed by the intense cold. Such moments

MOSLEM DRESS. CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN ANCIENT TIMES

BEDOUIN WOMAN'S DRESS. THE GIFT OF THE RECHABITES AND HIS WIFE

IN JERUSALEM. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN WITH WATER JAR

MOSLEM MODERN DRESS

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are the realities of travel. They are worth more than assiduous tramping round "places of interest." The very spirit of a land makes contact with what is spirit within you, and it is the soul that learns.

Within two days we were back in Mosul, guest of the governor at his spacious yet modestly appointed house. From the broad verandah we could see the commerce of the great waterway. Rafts were carrying down the merchandise.

"They are called 'Kalaks,'" said the governor, "and great skill is needed to guide them when the river runs swiftly." Then he went on to tell me how cleverly the logs are bound together, and how inflated skins are used to give greater buoyancy. Down from Mosul to Baghdad go the rafts, laden with sacks of grain, for on the river banks and wherever water can be led, corn crops flourish. The men use ropes and poles to guide their log convoys, and shout and sing lustily as they pass. Song of workers over the water, it would be well if my pen could render your noble and melancholy strains. But such things are beyond the writer's craft. One can hint at their beauty—and no more.

There on the terrace we talked of the problems of Iraq, that modern Arab kingdom carved out by the Peace Treaty from the Turkish villayets (provinces) of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Three million inhabitants; one hundred and fifty thousand square miles of desert and near desert, and hills and fertile river plains. And oil, flowing still from springs that are mentioned in the pages of Herodotus, and from others more prolific discovered South of Mosul. The oil has attracted predatory financiers; the indeterminate boundaries attract more primitive raiders in search of pasture land, or women, or cattle, or just killing for the love of it plus any chance loot that murder may bring.

"It is not in oil," said the governor, "that the happiness of our people lies. That is for the Western peoples. The Arab has no love for such commerce. No, agriculture is our problem. The watering of our land, the driving back of the desert, the planting of forest. This was a fruitful land until the time of Jenghis Khan. Not many people realise the workings of that story. The Great Khan never made war on religions, and there were Christians among his counsellors—Nestorian Christians. They hated the Muslims in their hearts, but fear of Jenghis Khan held their passions in check. But they secured a hold upon his grandson, Hulagu Khan, and persuaded him that the Caliph of Baghdad was his enemy. Baghdad was sacked with the thoroughness which a descendant of the Great Khan might be expected to show. Mutasim, last of the Caliphs, was slain. The outlying provinces, through jealousy, had not aided him. Now they repented, for they, too, were ravaged. The Mongols were irresistible, and carried all before them like a river in spring flood which breaks down every barrier. But Hulagu had no genius for government, he was a destroyer and no more. He caused the wondrous system of canals, and conduits, and sluices which were marvels of the ancient world, to be destroyed. First the waters flooded the lowlands; then slowly they were sucked away from the further plains and the desert crept in to take their place. Iraq grew barren; and not till now has the desert been resisted in its advance on the strip of fertile ground where all civilisation has its roots. Timur was another ravager who completed the desolation. That was in A.D. 1400, and after Timur's death there was the War of the Black and White Sheep, and internecine strife which only ended by the coming of the Turks. Yes, it's a strange and little known story. Nor is the tale of Feisal's rise to power less strange. Now, once again Iraq is

finding prosperity. Do you know that our last year's cotton crop was close on £100,000?" Thus spoke the Governor, blending historical survey with modern economic fact; and while he talked I heard the crews of the Kalaks chanting in the darkness and saw an occasional lantern spread a faint circle of fire on the black, thrusting waters.

On the following day I was taken to the schools and found them excellently managed, and now a chance to speed the cause of progress came my way. I was asked to deliver a lecture to the men of the city. No women were officially invited, as such a procedure was contrary to custom, but the local Press had already given an account of my feminist mission, and I soon discovered that the news that a woman was daring to speak in public had spread, so that not only the men but also the women of Mosul—in larger numbers—filled the hall to its full capacity. The women were in their national dress, wearing black "Abbas" over their heads and black veils. This was the first time they had ever assembled to hear one of their own sex speak in public, and it was not without its touch of humour. No sooner had the Director of Education introduced me to the audience than he hurriedly left the platform (though his chair had been placed on it not far from mine). The reason for this flight, I was told, was that had he stayed at my side he would later have come in for a good deal of criticism for having taken advantage of his position to view the women!

My lecture was on the progress of education in the East and the changing of old customs that had come to my notice. At the conclusion I was surrounded by the women who all expressed their delight that I, a woman of the East, was voicing the claims of my sisters to a larger life. Then they went out by a special door (so as to avoid coming in contact with

the men), and left for home, three or four occupying a horse-drawn carriage, of which there were dozens soon on the move. Thus ended the first occasion in the history of Mosul when women joined men at a public lecture.

Mosul is an important walled city with fortifications which once in the eighteenth century stood a six months' siege by a Persian King. It is an ancient centre of Christianity, and is still the seat of the Chaldean and the Nestorian Patriarchs and of a Jacobite bishop. The city improves on acquaintance. After my first ill-impression I found many paved streets and beautiful buildings, apart from the schools and other institutions. But it was in the surrounding country that I found most to see. Two mounds mark the site of Nineveh, the ancient capital of Assyria. We went to see the remains of that once famous city, which was destroyed by Nabopolassar (King of Babylon). But nothing remains to be seen, for all the treasures that were found during the excavations of the famous Layard are now in the British Museum. These excavations were crowned by the discovery of the tomb of the prophet Jonah.

At Baviar, however, situated amid fantastic mountain landscapes, and so far from Mosul that we journeyed a whole night to be there by sunrise, there is an amazing glimpse of the past. On the great rock walls are marvellous sculptures, figures of kings and gods and weird winged monsters. These were the work of fine artists in stone who laboured at the command of Shalmanazar, King of Assyria. I am no archaeologist to describe such wonders in detail, but when I saw the red daylight breaking round the crags and bringing into view the noble art imperishably imprinted upon them, I felt the essential greatness of those empires of the ancient past.

Basra, with its suburb Ashar, has been called the

Venice of the East. Perhaps there is sufficient resemblance to warrant the simile, particularly at high tide when the creeks flowing through the town are filled with water. The Shatt-al-Arab forms an imposing Grand Canal, up which sail ocean-going steamers. Its banks are lined not with stone buildings but with stately palm groves. When you cross the Shatt-al-Arab where the Tigris and the Euphrates join the sea, the sight of the mingling of the waters is worth watching. You see in Basra as you do in Venice, many graceful "Balams," or gondolas.

It is said that Basra is the home of Sindbad the Sailor and the port from which he set sail on the voyages recorded in the *Arabian Nights*. Whatever the truth of this, the city dates from the early days of the Muslim conquest under the leadership of the Caliph Omar—that is early in days of the seventh century. In the days of its prosperity it was a famous trading centre; but it all too rapidly lost its importance with the decay of the Abbasid power. It was captured by the Turks (1688) and a century later was taken by the Persians. Then it fell to the Turks again—under Suliman Pasha—under whose power it remained until it fell to Great Britain during the Great War of 1914. To-day Basra is quite different in many ways from the city I saw seven or eight years ago. It is the greatest date port in the world, and among other recent improvements have been the establishing of many modern institutions, including excellent schools.

On the way to Baghdad from Basra I paused at one of the strangest places in all the world.

Ur of the Chaldees, the site of the birthplace of Abraham, was for centuries lost and unknown, but in 1854 a Mr. Taylor (then British Vice-Consul at Basra) first started the excavations, in the course of which were discovered many astounding relics of a bygone age. Inscribed cylinders, for example, were

found and sent to England, and the inscriptions revealed that long before the time of Abraham Ur was a flourishing and prosperous metropolis trading with neighbouring countries both by land and sea.

The work of excavation ceased for a prolonged period, and in 1922 was commenced once more on behalf of the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. These resulting excavations are amongst the best I have seen in the East.

Strangest among the discoveries was a beautifully moulded silver ram whose feet were chained as if to branches. There has been much speculation, I am told, as to whether this can be held to have any relation to the legend of Abraham and Isaac. While there are certain difficulties opposing the acceptance of that theory, the coincidence remains most astonishing. As to this matter, I have an open mind, but I am opposed in general to the formulating of complete theories at the present stage of our knowledge. The problem of how civilisation originated has most certainly not been simplified by recent discoveries, and if anything is certain it is that the cut and dried explanations of a generation past have now to be so amended as to have little left of their one time confident assurance. Soviet archaeologists are at work around Tashkent and Samarkhand, and I shall want to know a great deal more concerning their finds before hazarding any guess concerning the ancient history of the near East.

If Basra is the city of Sindbad, then Baghdad is the city of Haroun al Raschid, the Caliph who walked unknown by night and met with such strange adventures. The eighth and ninth centuries after Christ were the days of its splendour, which has certainly not been exaggerated in later times. A centre of commerce and of religion, the city was even more

rightly famous as the abode of art and learning. "Dar-es-salaam," they called it—"The City of Peace."

Of its vicissitudes I have written already. When, after four centuries of Turkish rule the city fell to the English under General Maude in 1917, a new era was begun of which, however, the first signs were long in showing. Now, having visited the city many times in recent years, I can testify to steady progress, which latterly has come at amazing speed. Of all who have contributed to this, King Feisal must stand in the forefront. My personal memories of this great monarch are many and delightful. To me he never uttered an empty phrase of good will or congratulation, but questioned quietly and with understanding concerning all I had seen in the changing East where he was playing so great a part. Scholar and statesman, he knew nevertheless how a dangerous game should be played. But though his personal bravery was unquestioned, knowledge was his chief weapon. "Knowledge of events is good," he once said to me, while talking of education, "but better is knowledge of men." At another time he said: "Some say that every man has his price—but the only men I admire are those of whom you may say that the only price they ask of their leader is the right to honourable death for a worthy cause. I count myself fortunate that in my time I have found a few such men."

My last meeting with King Feisal was in 1932, when the Conference of Arab women was held in Baghdad, and we met for our meals beneath the famous Arch of Ctesiphon. I was sent for without ceremony and took coffee with the King.

Reports had reached him of religious strife in the schools and he was anxiously considering the question. It was not a matter of conflict between the faiths, but of friction between rival sects within the great framework of Islam. The King considered that

I should be impartial, and asked me what I thought of it all.

But there was little I could tell him.

"Strife of ideas may show mental vigour," I said.

"Not in an old religion," he answered. "In early days, yes, but later a faith must be as a rock on which all other structures of life may be builded. These men with their scholastic quibbles make faith seem like shifting sand."

"A man and an idea . . ." I said. "Such strange things happen when those two meet."

He laughed.

"Yes, strange and uncomfortable things," he said. "And yet if you try to stand between men and the ideas that may come to them you are tampering with the onward motion of life. Yes, for the sake of one great man with a great idea we must tolerate the swarm of small men whose ideas are even smaller than they are. These disputing sects who cry out over some trifling interpretation of an ancient text—how I am sick of them! I would like to have them in the darkness of the desert with a knife not far from their ribs—then they would see the affairs of heaven and earth in true proportion. . . . Ah well, let them dispute. There is no right or wrong in the logic of such matters. He only does wrong who plots ill against his neighbour. No, in these things none shall persuade me to take either side."

The next day as I gazed at the Shrine of Suliman the Pure—who was the Prophet Mohammed's barber, and whose monument is sacred to the Shiah sect so that pilgrims flock to see it from many lands, I could not help reflecting upon the endless diversity of men's minds. The Merjan Mosque, is nearby, its great gate among the most wonderful examples of Islamic art, and not far away is the Mutansariyah, the ancient

university of the Four Orthodox sects of Islam, and one of the finest buildings in the East. It is now used as a Customs House, and who shall say in which capacity it has performed most for mankind? The Citadel, too, detained me for a while, though it is less than one hundred years old; but I felt a thrill of recognition when they told me that on that site once stood the palace of Jafer the Barmecide, Vizier to Haroun al Raschid.

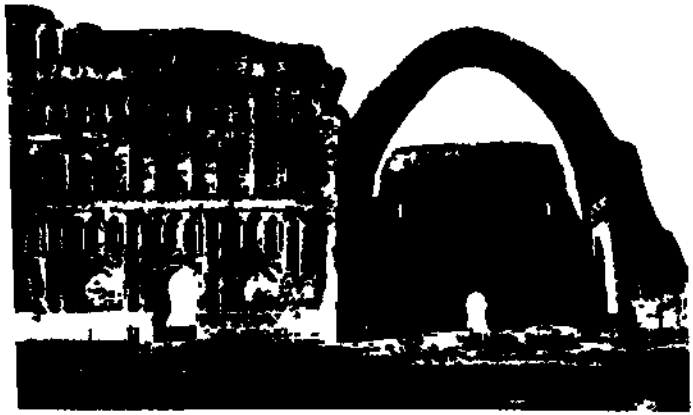
Much has changed in Baghdad, but not the bazaars. I doubt if they have altered much since Caliphate times. They now sell a strange mixture of the new and the old, but the bargaining follows the same lines as in the days of Haroun and Jafer, nor can there be much change in the general appearance of the vividly-coloured and ever-jostling crowds. In the lane of the Sabaean Silversmiths I found the most perfect workmanship still carried out by those whose art had come to them through heaven knows how many generations. Indeed, if they themselves are to be believed they know the actual names of their ancestors right to the time of Christ. They are Christians of the Jacobite sect, looking to the disciple James as their founder. He is considered to have made many miraculous journeys and to have been the most favoured of all Christ's companions. Yet who shall disentangle these ancient legends when every man whom you question has a different tale . . .?

From Baghdad I went by train to Hillah where I made a tour of the schools along with the governor who had been newly appointed and was inspecting the town. When we had seen all the modern improvements the Governor said: "Now let us have a glimpse of the old world. Will you allow me to escort you to Babylon? That is the greatest name of all in the tales of the past."

I was fortunate to make the journey with so courteous and cultured a man, but truth to tell, save for the glamour of the name I was disappointed. The Hanging Gardens, of which I had (foolishly enough no doubt) a most exaggerated hope, turned out to be a mere series of broken arches. It was only by the utmost use of the imagination that the past glories of the place could be pictured. Nebuchadnessar, to please his Median Queen, who sighed for the tree-clad uplands of her native country, caused the great terraces to be built and they were rightly considered one of the seven wonders of the world. The Governor, seeing my disappointment, took out pencil and paper and made a neat sketch for me showing how in his opinion the original design must have appeared. I have no doubt that the sketch came very near the truth, and I was very grateful. We next went to see the famous Lion of Babylon, which is a really fine piece of work. It is a huge hillside figure carved out of black basalt, and a prostrate man lies beneath the immense paws. Describing it as of Hittite origin, the Governor discussed the mystery of this strange race whose place in the ancient scheme of things is yet to be determined.

The Biblical Tower of Babel is now, in fact, a deep hole, which when I saw it was almost full of yellow water. The hole was presumably dug when the foundations were excavated, but it was now just a hole like any other, and with the best will in the world to feel the magic of the past I could not do so with so poor a setting as that. However, as always happens, I find, when you travel, no sooner are you faced with a disappointment that something happens of a beauty far greater than you have anticiptated. We had seen the great amphitheatre and the Greek theatre which dates from the period of Alexander the Great and we were just turning back, for the sun was low

ROCK CARVIN — TASKHT JAMSHID, IRAN



THE ARCH OF CTESIPHON

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when an old man rose from a heap of boulders where he had awaited us and asked permission to relate the history of the scene.

What he lacked in accuracy he certainly made up in vigour and vividness, for though I saw the Governor smile indulgently at certain of the statements, I myself was held spellbound by the flood of word pictures, and begged him to continue. So with gestures of his hands in the air he rebuilded for us the great palaces and with wealth of tone and dramatic emphasis he lived again the annals of conspiracy and assassination. While he talked, however, some shepherds came near and they were scornful of his tale.

"Do not listen to him, beautiful lady," said one stalwart villain, daring to interrupt. "He is an old liar. We know his stories only too well. It was Solomon the Wise who built these marvels here and Omar the Magnificent who dwelt in glory at this spot. Were not my ancestors present at the building, and did they not serve in the armies of the all-conquering Omar?"

This was too much for the old man, whose history, though highly-coloured, was of a far higher order of accuracy.

"Unlettered slave," he roared, "do you dare to raise your childlike voice against one who has studied for years in the mighty books that he might tell this story to those like this honoured lady who are worthy to hear it? Get you back to your sheep, who are fitting companions for one who has brains like to theirs. For it is written that though a man may lack knowledge of writing it is no shame to him, and though he cannot read he need not hide his face; nor shall he be humbled to the dust who has no power of ready speech. But he who will not listen shall be shamed not only upon earth but in the hell to which his ignorant wickedness shall surely lead him!"

Much fine invective broke the quietness of the evening, but in the end the shepherd was victorious. Once the Governor asked me should he intervene, but I begged him not to assert his authority since the contest was confined to words, and there is always delight in words well-managed, however ill their purpose. The shepherd won because he cared nothing, while the old man allowed his wrath and indignation to dam up his first fine flow of insult.

"Come honoured lady," said the shepherd, when the old man was quietened, "you are too young for such dull stories. See, I will play my pipe to you. And you shall watch the sheep answer my voice."

At that the shepherds gathered round and each, either with voice or pipe, caused certain sheep to leave the flock and come to them, and moved the great flock at will. It was a beautiful scene, with the level rays of the sun flooding the shining fleeces with red and gold and glinting on the polished cheekbones of the lean watchers of the plains. And when I reflected that long before Babylon was builded men such as these had doubtless led flocks little different from those I now saw, I came to the conclusion that it is not in stony ruins that we can come closest to the spirit of the past.

CHAPTER VII

THE KEEPER OF THE DESERT

TO HAJI YASSIM

You who keep faith with your king,
And are true friend to all men,
Smiting only to save, heeding little of glory,
I think of you not as the fighter,
Not as the lord of the desert,
But as a jovial companion, telling a story.

You who ride with the wind, and are swift as the storm cloud,
Whose bullet flies straight, whose sword in the moonlight has glistened,
I see you in friendly firelight, laughing and jesting,
While seated around you your dark-eyed warriors listened.

Your stories, your mirth, your friendship in flowing measure,
Drove from my spirit weariness and despair,
Swiftly as once you drove at your monarch's bidding
His desert foes from their dark and secret lair.

IN the winter of 1928 I met Haji Yassim—known as the Guardian of the Desert. A tall, slightly-bearded man, his burnous flung round him, he greeted us one night when we had stopped for shelter at a huddle of houses on the great plain round which the wind was howling mournfully. There was then no road and no hotel. We had started off with three Nash cars but had become separated in the darkness. Yassim gave orders that search was to be made for the missing cars and that the searchers were to carry hot tea and brandy in case the travellers were prostrate with the intense cold. Then he bade us welcome to his shelter and we sat and talked till dawn. Yassim reclined on a divan and told us how King Feisal had sent for him and given him his orders. The desert must be tamed for the service of men. Tracks must

be marked and posts established. The human jackals who infested the great waste must be wiped out.

"How am I to do this?" asked Yassim.

"That is for you to find out," replied the King. "I will not insult you with detailed instructions, for there is no man living who knows more of these regions than you. All I will tell you is this—you have my word and my sword behind you. Deal rightly and fear nothing. No matter what steps you take against the outlaw, rest assured I shall not question your conduct. I have faith in you and you must have faith in me."

". . . And so I started," said Yassim.

"My task needed first and foremost—men. I sought them out one by one. . . . Arabs I had known from my boyhood, men to whom the desert was wife and mother, men whose oaths were firm as the mountains, whose eyes were like the eagle's, whose hands once set to a task were not easily shaken.

"On camels, on mules, often with our equipment loaded on asses, we began to patrol the caravan routes. We made no expeditions after robbers, for we had neither the guns nor the numbers for such warfare. First we aimed at making the great tracks safer. Here we would build a hut . . . and then another there. Here we would raise a great heap of stones to mark the path for those who journeyed.

"At first the robbers laughed. The desert was wide, they said, and we were a pitiful few. They spied upon us and mocked our efforts. Sometimes the dwellers in the desert aided them, sometimes even those we sought to protect were leagued against us, thinking that we could give no real protection, and that it was more profitable to make a bargain with the robbers, giving them information as to others in return for safety for themselves. But I knew that right must triumph. I waited.

"Then one day a caravan was looted, and among the stolen property was a bag of Turkish coins. I had a description of the money, and knew that it was of a kind not usual on the desert. . . . See . . . ." Yassim held up a coin for my inspection.

"When that news came I knew I could weave a net of silver mesh. Little by little we traced those coins, always finding from whom they had come. One village in the hills to the east was the source. Of that, at last, I was sure.

"We struck forthwith, but with guile. Our spies spread word that we were away to the north and that a rich caravan, ill-guarded, was coming from the south. Oh, it was a good plan. The Prophet himself could hardly have thought of a better. That caravan was guarded by the pick of my fighters. They walked like cripples, having tied sticks to their legs that those who spied on them from afar might think them old. They had rusty guns on show, and the best rifles that our king could send us hidden on the backs of the mules.

"The robbers attacked—they were beaten off with losses. Home they rushed, but I and some others of my men who had ridden all night to do it, had burned their village, and were waiting for them. Perhaps a handful escaped, but not many. The first blow for law and righteousness had been shrewdly struck.

"And then, perhaps because my success had pleased him, the King sent me a motor car, and with my own savings I purchased another. Now it was no longer a matter of hours in the saddle. We were here, there, everywhere, and no robber could tell from behind what sand drift or boulder we might not spring.

"But cars go to pieces sometimes, and one night we were unlucky. Driving without lights we struck some loose sand. The wheels spin round but nothing happens. We are trapped. Before we can do anything the robber Bedawin and his men are upon us.

First there are scattered volleys. Then it is hand to hand. We are five—and they are twenty—yet we did not lose a man, and they left eight dead upon the plain. Ah, did I not tell you I had chosen my men with care?"

He sipped his tea, and a light of reminiscence gave beauty to his keen eyes.

"Bit by bit we cleaned the desert. Villagers learned that we harmed no innocent man, and that we kept our word. The robbers did not keep theirs. When prey was scarce they robbed their allies. I watched and was glad. They were drawing the noose about their own necks.

"Then came the day when I could tighten it. We brought more soldiers from the south, and then with us for guides they made a circle round the last of the lairs. . . . Well, there is no more to tell. One fight is much like another. . . . Now they call me Guardian of the Desert, but I could have done little without a wise King to serve who gave me help when I asked and never wavered in his trust. . . ."

Much more I learned from Haji Yassim, whom I greet as a man among men. One night, years later, when all the desert was mapped and patrolled and a big hotel stood on the site of his humble hutments, I went with him far into the desert and sat with his men at the camp fire. There I found that he was loved not only for his bravery but for his wit. The Arab loves a good storyteller. Here I have set down a tale which Yassim told. The words are there but not the voice. You must imagine that, a rich, quiet, human voice, which kept severe gravity at the very climax of a jest. Hear him, then, tell this tale, and many others, while the cool night wind rustled in our cloaks and the firelight glowed on dark impassive faces, whose eyes were brighter than the shining stars which seemed to crowd down upon us as if to share the tale.

The Story of Maan Ibn Zaidah

Be it known that this great ruler was monarch of all our country and of lands beyond its limits. But though his wealth was vast as that of the Great Caliphs in the golden days, he was meek and humble, speaking no anger but doing justice with kindly heart and mild words. Now throughout all the sown lands and the desert and even in the fastnesses of the high hills men spoke of this marvel among monarchs —he who for all his power raised not his voice to threaten or abuse, and many were the tales they told of him. Yet was there a certain Arab who doubted in his heart if such things could be, and when returning travellers swore by the most holy Koran, the beard of the Prophet and the highest minaret of the Mosque of Omar that the tales were true, he answered them thus:

"You say that this king is all sweetness and mildness of speech nor offers menace or anger to any man. Now this was never the way of kings as I have heard it, and save that I know you for righteous men I would hardly credit your stories. Nevertheless, granted they be true, do they indeed prove the saintliness of Maan Ibn Zaidah? For think, my friends, how easy for a monarch to be gracious to whom all men offer flatteries and whose bidding they haste to do though it be conveyed only in the briefest of glances! Believe me when I say that were any to speak roughly in his presence our ruler would requite him in kind. Nay, would far exceed him in bitterness of tongue."

Thus spake the Arab, a dweller in a hidden corner of the land. Yet travellers to whom he addressed his doubtings professed themselves certain that he was wrong. So simple and so humble was Ibn Zaidah, they said, that though a mere peasant were to insult him to his face he would return a quiet answer. At length the Arab replied: "Though it cost me my life I will

prove my judgment sound. I will test the charity and humility of the great king who speaks only kindness."

To the king's house went the Arab, attired in the foulest garments he could find, his sheepskin cloak worn with the mouldering flesh outwards, an offence alike to nostrils and to eyes. He thrust his way unheralded into the royal presence, nor did he drop his eyes at the glance of the king but gazed with an insolent stare.

"Oh, you who sit at ease upon your throne," he said, "I bid you remember that you are little higher than the beasts. Is not the quilt that covers you a sheep's skin? Are you not shod in camel hide?"

And Maan answered.

"I thank you for this kind service you have done me. You speak the truth. I pray that I may never forget what you have said."

"Great God above!" cried the Arab, "how comes it that so worthless a man as you has power over a kingdom? Who taught you the trick of sitting upon a throne!"

"God is indeed great and he is ever above us," answered Maan. "I marvel, even as you, that he has called me to kingship. He alone knows why—to him you must address your questions. Glory and wisdom are His alone, and for ever."

Then the Arab laughed aloud.

"I would never greet you as king," he cried, "though I lived for ever."

"That is for you to decide," Maan answered. "What are salutations save mere politeness, which a man may give or withhold as he may choose."

Then the Arab, dumbfounded by such mild answers, determined on a desperate insult. He would asperse the monarch's hospitality.

"Ah, I have heard of you," he said. "You eat rich food in secret and your guests are served black bread."

Maan hung his head in shame.

"You do right to reproach me," he said. "I have

sometimes thought that a monarch may eat what food he wants and give what food he wishes. Though I have striven always to be generous, even to think thus was a sin."

"Before Allah," cried the Arab, "though I thirst and starve upon the journey and lose all the goods I possess, I will not tarry longer in the lands of one who is so weak and foolish a king."

"Doubtless you do well," said Maan. "If you stay with us you are welcome, and if you leave us, peace be with you."

"Son of an imperfect woman!" cried the Arab, as if in anger, "are you content then that I starve upon my way? Since it is your worthlessness which forces me to leave you, at least give me money for my journey and compensation for the land and other belongings I must leave behind!"

"I ask your forgiveness," said Maan. "You do well to remind me of my duty to deal justly with all men. Take, then, one thousand dirham."

"Do you insult me!" stormed the Arab. "One thousand dirham! Is that your justice!"

"Take then another thousand," said Maan quietly.

This was too much for the Arab. Casting pretence aside he knelt and kissed the floor before his monarch.

"May God keep you long to reign over us," he said, humbly. "I did but test those virtues in you which all men spoke of and which, I am ashamed to say, I was moved to doubt. Truly you are a saint, and there is none so wise and good upon this earth."

Then Maan turned to his treasurer. "For this man's insults I have given him two thousand dirham. Therefore, to be just, must I not requite his praises by four thousand?"

And it was done even as the king had said.

Here ends the story of Maan Ibn Zaidah, kindest and humblest of kings.

CHAPTER VIII

PERSIAN JOURNEY

My brother and I set out from Baghdad, making for Teheran by motor car. On reaching the Persian frontier one of the first things we noticed was the national flag flying over the police station. It bears the "Red Lion and the Sun," the symbols of the empire. Passing through the town of Kerman-Shah and Kask Shireen we reached Teheran, the capital of Persia, on a November day of glorious sunshine, and through the clear air we saw in the distance the crown of Mount Damavand clad in a mantle of snow. This peak, 18,700 feet above sea level, is easily marked amid the surrounding hills, and served as a guide in many of our wanderings.

Teheran itself is a beautiful city, lying snugly in the centre of a range of richly-coloured mountains. Most of the mountain-sides are barren, but the rocks glow with colour. The population numbers about 300,000. As the city is some 4,000 feet above sea level it is a pleasant and bracing place to live in.

The city contains fewer antiquities than might be expected, having been destroyed by the Afghans in 1728. Agha Mohamed Khan Khajar, the founder of the Khajar dynasty, made it his capital, and built mud walls with towers and gates which were of little military value since the ramparts were so shaky.

Now Teheran has twelve gates, and very fine they are. In recent years many broad streets and a number of first-rate buildings in the western style of architecture have been built. The north and north-west

of the city are the residential quarters of most of the well-to-do Persians and Europeans. Here the new Pahlavi Palace is situated. Another very fine edifice is the Arch or Citadel, standing almost in the centre of the city proper. It contains a royal palace and a number of modern buildings occupied by the ministers for national and foreign affairs.

Lying south of the Arch are the bazaars, most of them roofed, with different sections and stalls. They have endless little streets; some leading to the carpet merchants, others to the jewellers, and so forth, all kaleidoscopic in colour and gloriously polyglot in sound. Under the rule of the present Shah, Teheran is not the same as it was some ten years ago. You now have post and telegraph offices, and the two big banks, the Pahlavi and the Milli, magnificent additions to the architecture and commercial progress of the capital,

The houses are not so attractive from the outside as they are from within, and this is especially so of the houses of the rich. The large majority of the dwellings in the ancient quarter are squalid, and the squalor is not always picturesque.

Every large house has its garden. The Persians are extremely fond of their gardens and tend them with great pride and care. In blossom time they are a glorious sight, filled with flowering shrubs and exquisite fruit trees—pear, apricot, almond, peach, against a background of sycamore. Most of the bulbs are planted in the spring so that the blossoms will be ready for the celebration of the Nau-Rusz, the ancient Persian festival of their new year, which begins at the Vernal Equinox. Then they break suddenly from the earth in rapturous purity of colour, and in the small pond, which is never missing from any Persian garden, their bright fire lives again, so that their beauty is twice seen. And always beyond the

trees are the subtle minarets of Allah. The onlooker cannot escape the spell of the ruins of ancient mosques, which fill the heart with wonder and admiration.

Shimran, a district to the north of Teheran, on the slopes of the Elbusez mountains, has sixty villages. These are frequented in the summer months by the inhabitants of the city as well as those of the foreign colony. Here the charm of Persia can be realised to the full. Close by is one of the summer palaces of His Majesty the Shah, a picture of white, leaf-fringed beauty. One day when I was driving with the Egyptian Minister we were privileged to meet His Majesty, who, dressed in a long khaki coat, was watching some reconstruction work in progress. That brief encounter left me with a very vivid recollection of one who is both soldier and scholar, and above all a gentleman. That same day I saw the palace of Amir Khazaal, ex-prince of Monhamareh, who for reasons of state is never permitted to leave his beautiful home.

We held our Women's Conference in Teheran with great success. I have no space here to give details of the many discussions which took place, and it must suffice to say that the whole question of how women might be freed from the oppressive customs of the East was dragged out into the open. The problems of morality and of the traffic in young girls were dealt with frankly, and the whole series of meetings were characterised by a complete absence of useless rhetoric, and in its stead the plain speech which is the prelude to getting things done. When I returned to my hotel after the last of the meetings I was told that there were two gentlemen to see me. I was very tired, and expected that they would be journalists so I sent a courteous message pleading fatigue and asking was their business urgent. They answered that while there was no immediate urgency, they had come a great

CAMEL CARAVAN IRAN *Photo Pope*

A KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL IN SHIRAZ IRAN

way to see me. I thereupon asked them to come up, and received them in my room—not without a moment of mutual embarrassment when I saw that they were Mullahs.

They were indeed two priests of the old school, scholarly but none the less fanatical Moslems, and they made it plain that they had come to reproach me for my activities, and to ask me to stop stirring up the women of the East. The elder of the two was all courtesy, but it was clear that the younger considered me an emissary of the devil, and that only the knowledge that I had friends in high places prevented him from openly abusing me.

"But do you not see, my daughter, the perversity and uselessness of your self-appointed task? To seek to give women political power is to attempt to build archways with straw. It is impossible, and those who attempt it bring only disaster upon themselves and others. You are seeking to tamper with the natural order of earth and heaven long ago ordained by Allah. Surely it is sufficient that you, a daughter of Arabia, of old family we are told, even it may be with some distant kinship to the great ones of Islam, should have become a Christian. Keep then your disturbing teachings for those of the Christian faith, and let the countries where the true faith holds sway remain in possession of the peace which it has brought them."

"If what I am attempting is impossible," I said, "why do you seem to fear that I shall accomplish it? And as for your accusation that I am an intruder here, believe me when I say that wherever in this world I find ignorance or injustice I shall pray for strength to intrude upon them."

"What is this injustice of which you always speak?" asked the younger man. "You say that women should have equal rights with men—very well then, first show

me that you have equal strength. See, I lift this chair with one hand. Can you do that?"

"No," I answered.

"Then you are not my equal. God has not meant you to be."

"And your brother is your equal?" I asked, indicating the older man.

"Most certainly."

"Yet if I think right you are stronger than he?"

"Ah, your answers are inspired by the devil," said the young mullah in disgust, clenching his fists with mortification.

"Believe me," I said, "I do only what I think is right, and I have no wish to cause disturbance or any harm. If I come here to fight against evils it is only because you, whose duty it is, have failed to fight as you should. I, a weak woman, strive against the Sygha, and you who have power do nothing. A word from you and that practice would be ended. Why have you not spoken that word?"

"It is permitted by the Prophet that a man shall have concubines," said the elder priest.

"Permitted, perhaps," I said, "but not encouraged. And do you think that the buying and selling of women is pleasing to Allah? Answer me that."

"Surely a man will value what he has paid for?"

"If he pays for a woman as for a camel it is as a camel that he will value her."

"I would that all men valued their wives as highly as their camels," said the younger priest.

I could not keep back a smile.

"Is it not strange," I said, "that when we strive to make our words seem wise there is often little wisdom in them, and that it is in speaking simply together that the wisest words are said. Let us then try to speak frankly one to the other. You are good men and learned, and for these things I honour you. You,

in your turn, have honoured me by coming these many miles to question my intentions. What is it that divides us? How can we both love God and yet be at strife together?"

But that was a question we could not answer and when they left me some time later, though there was more friendliness in their tones there was the same blank incomprehension of my aims and the need for their rapid fulfilment. Men who despair at the advance of women all fail to realise that the freedom we claim must lead to a cleaner atmosphere in the benefits of which they too will share. The subjection of women is not an isolated wrong. Its effects spread ill-health through all the body politic. Women, denied their obvious rights, seek to get power in other ways. Many and ignoble are the expedients which some of them descend to, but all these things are the result of the fact that proper channels of expression are denied them.

So great was the wrath stirred up in some quarters by the boldness of our Congress that when, some time later, a thief broke into my room and attacked me after rifling my few possessions, there were some who hinted that there was political significance in the crime. I cannot too strongly deny this suggestion, which I should not mention at all did I not know that it had achieved a certain amount of publicity among those who have instinctive dislike of the obvious and seek always for hidden motives in everything. The thief broke into my room because the rumour was that we were fabulously wealthy—whereas the facts were far otherwise. I was awakened by a shaking of my bed, and thought at first that my brother had come to tell me it was morning, so it is clear that the thief was particularly clumsy. Suddenly realising that he was not my brother, I jumped up and seized him, calling out: "Harami! Harami!" that is, "Stop thief!" We struggled as far as the window, but then good sense

prompted me to let him go. He was becoming desperate and there was a knife in his hand. I felt that I would willingly lose all my money rather than make the closer acquaintance of that wicked-looking blade. As it was, I was sorry that I let go, for had I clung on one instant longer my brother would have had time to secure my assailant. He got clean away, however, leaving us to face a ransacked room. When all was checked we found our loss not serious, owing to the fact that by far the greater portion of our meagre funds was carried in the form of travellers' cheques. Our chief loss was my brother's portfolio, containing a few shillings only in cash. Unfortunately some very lovely though comparatively inexpensive silverwork which he had bought as a present for his fiancée was stolen, and this he was never able to replace to his entire satisfaction, since some of it was antique.

We now had a chance to observe the efficiency of the Persian police. A lamp was found in the room which was identified as belonging to one of the hotel servants, but this was no great help, since it might easily have been borrowed. The visitor across the corridor was next questioned, and since they were not satisfied with his story they detained him for a week. When the case against this poor man had collapsed the Chief of Police said to me, "Even though your losses are not serious I give you my word that every scrap of your property shall be recovered if I have to turn out personally the pockets of every thief in Shiraz!" He was as good as his word. Nearly seven months later, while we were in Calcutta, a letter arrived which had followed us on all our pilgrimage. It told us that the thief was caught—he was the hotel gardener—and that all our property was safely in Egypt in charge of the Iranian Legation. Later I learned that though they had been led at first on several false trails, because various people whom the

questioned were nervous and so lied ridiculously in spite of their innocence, the Persian police went steadily to work, determined—as a high official put it—to wipe out this stain upon the country's honour, though I should hardly have rated it as seriously as that. They made the lives of the criminal element in Shiraz so uncomfortable that at last the thieves themselves co-operated in the quest, knowing they would have no peace till the matter was settled. And so the truth came out.

I was from the first most favourably impressed by the skill and courtesy of the police, though I was also aware of the great difficulties under which they labour. "In the old days," said the Chief, "the police had a bad name. Someone had to be arrested, and they didn't care whom. So now people are nervous and tell absurd lies when we question them. But this will all be changed when the people learn that the innocent have nothing to fear. Your neighbour, for instance—an innocent man. Why did he give us wrong information? Of course we had to detain him then, although we had no great suspicions. And that wasted time. Only when the people learn to help us shall we be one hundred per cent efficient. But they soon will, madame, they soon will. Already there is an improvement."

I thought of the French philosopher who said, "Believe me, though I were accused of stealing the towers of Notre Dame I should get across the frontier if I heard that the agents of police were after me!" and realised that this lack of trust in the police on the part of the common people is a serious matter. Even in London I found that in many districts the very poor consider the police as their natural enemies even when they have committed no crime—and yet unquestionably the British force is the finest in the world.

Education plays a great part in the creation of trust. The French philosopher lived in a distant time, and things are different to-day. What breeds distrust is not so much the reputation of the police themselves as the fear of lawyers, of documents. This is the case even more in India than in Persia, but there is plenty of evidence that it exists even in London. I cannot emphasise too clearly that while there are many conservative-minded ministers in every country who think that the spread of education only makes the people more difficult to manage, there is abundant evidence that it always makes them easier to govern—unless the government is dishonest.

I said as much to a Director of Education in a large Persian town, and he agreed with me. "Education for the common people is the foundation of all progress," he said. "Come, you shall see how we lay that foundation." So I began a long enquiry into the state of Persian schools which are most carefully fostered by the Government.

In Persia, as in most countries at some time or another, there has come a point in the development of the educational system where a dispute rages as to the worth of the old "classical" learning as opposed to the requirements of a mercantile age. Now I should be very sorry to think that any Mohammedan boy should omit a thorough grounding in the Koran, which contains much admirable doctrine and has above all that lordly simplicity of language which is the foundation of a good prose style. But slavish learning by rote of large portions is obviously a waste of mental power, and I was glad to see that while the new systems make due allowance for religious requirements, they aim at imparting useful knowledge of the world to-day. Geography is being given increasing prominence, and so is the Arabic language—which has wide uses in the East. As for the higher learning, facilities in this

direction appeared reasonably sufficient for men, but there was not so much thought for women in these matters as I could have wished. Taking the educational machinery as a whole, however, I found that in the principal towns at least it is functioning with true efficiency, and my impression was of school after school of clean, happy and intelligent children. If in the country districts conditions are not so good, I can only refer my English readers to recent reports of similar schools in their own land. It will always be the case that the distant provinces lag behind the capital.

Those who have heard the terrible stories of child labour in the carpet factories can rest assured that these things are no longer so. Here and there the "sweat shop" may evade official vigilance, but all the works that I saw, while still capable of improvements, which I look to the women of Persia to achieve when they obtain a voice in the Government, were none of them seriously at fault. As for the carpet making, I would willingly write of it, but many have done so already, and to do justice to this great craft would need many pages, and an abler pen than mine. The photographs must speak for themselves, with this addition, that until you have seen the emergence of glorious beauty from the first faint indications of design to the finished product you cannot really appreciate the meaning of those exquisite carpets on which you tread unthinkingly in your European homes. The history of the craft is in itself one of the great art romances of the world. But it can only be really felt when watched in the Persian factory or in the small loom in some hillside cottage of the hidden mountain lands beyond.

Persian art is superb. At its best it combines a delicacy of perception with amazing breadth and vigour of design. Even when less successful, it compels attention by the sheer intricacy and perfection of the detailed workmanship. Were I to write of the treasures

which were spread before me I should discard many a pen before my tale were ended.

Chief among the marvels I feasted my eyes upon was the Gulistan Palace or the Royal Museum. It is a wonderful building of perfect oriental design and contains all the precious treasures of old time Persian kings. There are also many presents from Peter the Great of Russia, most of them plates and vases inlaid with precious stones. Swords and daggers encrusted with gems dazzle the gaze of the spectator, while their curious workmanship delights the aesthetic eye. Many are the gifts, and curious their shapes and sizes, which are presents from the Indian kings. Ex-King Amanullah and Queen Souraya presented the Shah with a gold watch inlaid with diamonds, and with one huge stone in the centre round which dozens of smaller ones radiate to form the rays of the sun. The Queen's personal present is a gold basket for sweets or fruit. It is an exquisite gift. But the most charming sight in the palace, I thought, were the crystal rooms, three in number. Their walls and ceilings are of crystal, and they produce at first sight a sense of bewilderment in the onlooker. Portraits of Persian kings hang on the walls, and much can be learned of the glorious history of the country during a visit to this enchanting treasure house. Most amazing of all the wonders, nevertheless, is the Peacock Throne, which was brought from Delhi by Nadir Shah of Persia. No description could do justice to its splendour. Inlaid with priceless gems set with an unmatched perfection of artistry, it ranks alone among the treasures of all the East. Near it is the throne on which the present Shah was crowned. It is also inlaid, but with pearls and other stones of brighter hue, and on its side is a blue flag with the Lion and the Sun worked in gold embroidery. Just under the steps of the throne is a Persian carpet that has all its borders worked in real pearls.

PERSIAN WOMAN AT HER LOOM (*Photo: Page*

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In one wing of the Palace the present Shah receives his guests. There is another throne of purest marble on which a vivid group of lions is sculptured. A fountain stands in the centre of the hall, where there is also a dais where the King and Queen used to sit and watch the games and dances. On this throne there are Persian verses engraved, and I reflected that in European countries there is rarely such close touch between the monarch and the poetic art.

Leaving the palace, I turned to gaze at the perfect beauty of the flower-encircled pool in which the white architecture achieved when reflected, an even purer and more gracious beauty. What can I write of such a place as this, I thought? What use is it to catalogue the gems within when the whole is itself a gem of flawless workmanship such as might be placed before the gods as some justification for their creation of man?

On the morning of January the 1st, 1933, accompanied by my brother, I set out for Rasht, which is the capital of the Guilan province. It was cloudy, and so close that it seemed likely that we should have a thunderstorm.

We left Teheran and climbed rapidly into the hills till we reached the first Chaikhana. These are small cottages or refreshment rooms where passengers halt to drink their Persian tea, to which they are staunch devotees, believing that it warms them in the cold weather and is preventive against chills. A better protection, however, are their coats which are called "posteens." These are made of sheepskin, the wool being inside, with the leather outwards. We found men seated on the floor beside the fire smoking their hookhahs, kalyouns, or hubble-bubbles as they are more commonly called by Europeans, some of them, I observed, were smoking hashish. We lunched at the Chaikhana—a meal of fried eggs, curdled milk, palow (that is a sort of curry) and tea. When we

came out to continue our journey, we found that the cold had suddenly become more intense, and that the wind-shield of the car was coated with ice, the driver being obliged to remove it with his knife. While he was doing this a blizzard swept down from the hills, and he had to first fix his skid-chains to the wheels before starting off to drive through the snow. Our road lay across the mountains. To the right were high crags and on the left was a big river, the Safid Rude, running swiftly through a deep valley. Occasionally our car went so close to the edge of the road that we could see the huts of the natives many hundreds of feet beneath us in the river valley. This mountain road is extremely narrow and dangerous, for cattle, cars and lorries all take the same trail, and there is very little clearance when they pass. The present Shah is now having this important road considerably widened, but at the time of which I write it was a test for the strongest of nerves.

Snow frequently delayed us, but save for some perilous moments now and then there is little to record of that journey save the magnificence of the mountain scene. One story is worth telling, however, since it contains a warning for travellers. We had halted at a Chaikhana for a midday meal and a rest when I was approached by a tall stranger, a man of some wealth and position, who was passing in the opposite direction. After apologising for intruding upon me he asked: "Where is your driver?"

"Why, in with the other drivers at the rear of the Chaikhana," I said. "He seemed happier to be with them." I was, you see, defending myself from the charge of snobbery for Allah knows I can mix with all people, and never give a thought to their social position.

"Come," he said, "we must get him out of there."

And so, without further ceremony, he went straight

in to the room where the drivers were seated and curtly told my man to put down his pipe and come out.

"Tell your brother on no account to take his eyes off this man during halts," said the stranger. "They smoke opium in these rear dens, and the result is death and destruction. You have time to spare, so I will show you."

He thereupon took the wheel of his own car and I sat beside him. Slowly he drove along the dangerous mountain pass.

"Now look down," he said at last.

It was a hairpin bend from which the black and red rock fell away with an awful and inescapable sheerness. At the bottom, on a stony slope, I could see the tangled remains of what had once been a saloon car. "That happened yesterday," said the friendly stranger. "Opium." He gazed round at the crags. "Why should a man seek forbidden dreams with beauty such as this around him?" he cried. "Four men and one woman died at this spot not many hours ago because their driver smoked opium while they halted. I have reported the keeper of the place and there will be an investigation. This opium peril must and shall be stamped out." He paused. "If only it was merely cars they smashed," he said sadly. . . . "But I tell you whole countries are in peril. You are a writer, a poetess, they say. I am proud to know you. But I charge you to use your pen to expose this awful evil, which rots the very heart of the East. To-day I have done you good service, I think, for your driver might have succumbed—who knows? Promise me that in return you will speak and write without ceasing against opium, remembering always that the car which lies down there might well have been yours."

I never learned the name of that stranger, who quitted us with the same courteous swiftness which

had marked his approach, but if he reads these pages I want him to know that as far as was possible I have kept my word.

As may well be imagined, we did not take our eyes off our driver till we were safely at our journey's end, though the poor man protested that we wronged him terribly, and that he had never in his life smoked opium. And so we came safely to Rasht, and thence to Pahlavi, on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

The seaport of Pahlavi reminds me of Alexandria. In the background are hills, covered with shady trees. It is a little paradise. Never shall I forget the delightful days I spent in Pahlavi, where life is leisurely and beautiful, even at night, when all the streets of the town are illuminated with electricity in multi-colours. The inhabitants are very proud of the modernities, but it was the bright sky, keen yet strangely tender, which made the deepest impression on me. May peace and quiet reign there for ever.

Apart from the Government buildings, there are other beautiful houses built in the modern European style, for time marches on. Business between Rasht and Pahlavi is done by sailing boat, motor-launch, automobiles, horse-drawn vehicles, and mule and donkey—so the roads and the water of the bay are alive with movement. The chief commodities of trade are rice, soap and silk—good merchandise. The air of quiet prosperity, I felt, was well earned.

Pahlavi is fallen far from its ancient importance nowadays, but there is every sign it will soon win again a name among the great mercantile centres of the land. If this ever happens I hope that its charm will be preserved. It is something unique in my travel memories. Lest my picture appear too idyllic let me say that once on our way from Rasht across the water we started in bright sunshine only to be

overtaken by a squall which nearly capsized us. The wind, howling like a fiend, whipped the sea to a white fury. All the little boats of the waterfront were tossed like corks in the storm. Then all at once it was over. Sky and sea were blue. Pahlavi smiled at our drenched misery like a naughty child warding off anger with promises of good behaviour. "We didn't really mean it," seas, skies, green hills and lovely white houses all joined together to say. Miserable though I was, my heart surrendered to that plea. I could think no ill of Pahlavi, which I sighed to leave.

Setting out from Rasht and crossing the river Safid Rude, we proceeded to Lahijan, a town of great and historical antiquity. As the bridge across the river was broken we were obliged to cross by boat. Not wishing to abandon our car, we had it put into a large flat-bottomed barge. The lashings came loose *en route* and we had an exciting struggle with the great metal beast, but I reflected that happily nothing could upset that colossal barge of ours. That was true enough, but it sprang a leak we could not cope with, and we were all thoroughly wet through by the time we crawled up the bank on the other side.

We reached Lahijan after a few hours, and were received by the Governor and president of the municipality, with whom were the director and manager of the tea factory. They took us along to the old and historic mosque in the city, built to the memory of the Great Khan who was the first to bring the tea seed from India to Persia. Having paid appropriate homage to that far-sighted man, we then went to the tea factory and the plantation, which is nearby. The manager was a young Persian, who had had his training in China. He explained to us how the leaves are dried and rolled by machines, and showed us round the gardens, where he told us the different ages of the trees. It is only after four years' growth that the

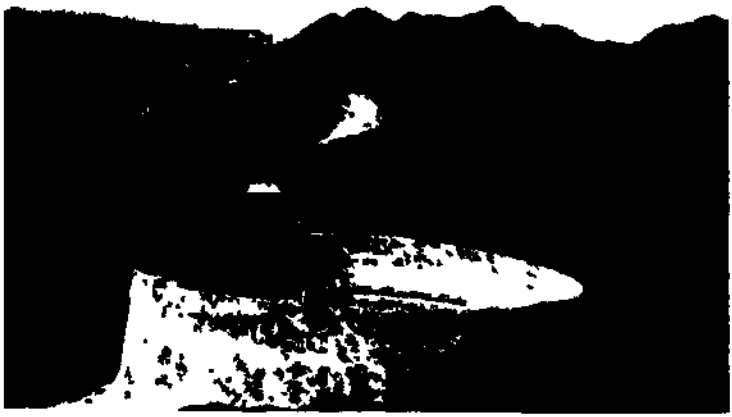
leaf of the plant is ready for use, which means considerable capital outlay.

The tea bush is very like a lemon tree, with little yellow flowers between the leaves. The flowers contain little seeds, which look like peppercorns. When fully developed they resemble a small brown nut—this is the seed that is planted. Under every large leaf there is a much smaller one—the tea leaf. The tea of Lahijan, by the way, is delicious. We had some on our return to Rasht, where we were the guests of the Governor and his wife at a farewell dinner before leaving for the capital.

We returned to Teheran, our starting point, by way of Kaswin, the road at times leading through narrow valleys and gorges with rocks towering up on either side. Whenever we neared a village, the villagers streamed out of their homes in crowds to cheer, for word had preceded us that we were friends of the Governor. The natives of these parts, I learned, had never seen a woman wearing a European hat, and in consequence of being thus attired I became the object of wide-eyed wonder to these simple folk. At one village on our journey we were invited to dine with some of the local leaders. We all sat on "Kelims," which were spread on the ground, and were offered large dishes of mutton and palow which tasted very good; the inevitable hot tea was also served, and there was music before we were allowed to continue our journey. On the way one of our tyres was punctured, and while it was being attended to, I climbed to the top of a crag from where I had a wonderful panorama of the surrounding country and the distant mountains around Demavand. All the best views have to be climbed for. I urge any traveller to leave his car frequently and seek out the beauties for himself.

Our next trip was south to Ispahan, our first stop being made at Koum, an ancient and once

THE MOUNTAINS OF IRAN



A TOWER OF SILENCE, IRAN

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populous city. The greater part of it is now in ruins, but it holds the tombs of many famous monarchs and others of pious fame. Among the latter, the most famous is the shrine of Fatima (or Massooma) the daughter of the seventh Imam and the sister of the Imam Mehdi, a great figure of Islam. It is one of the great sights of Persia which no visitor should leave unseen. Yet he cannot enter this shrine unless he is a Muslim, and as I was wearing a European hat I was forced to stay in the courtyard whilst my brother, who was wearing his Egyptian Fez (or Tarboosh) went inside. Whilst he was gone a number of people surrounded me and demanded to know to what religion I belonged. A straightforward answer would probably have brought about serious consequences not only to myself, but to my brother, so I replied that the majority of Egyptians are Sunnies and only a few are Shiahs. They seemed to be satisfied with this reply. Nevertheless, they endeavoured to convince me of the superiority of the Shiahs, being of that branch of Islam themselves.

When my brother returned he told me of the many ceremonies he had had to go through, and of the Golden Dome and the numerous beauties of the shrine. I longed to adopt a disguise and see for myself, but there was no time, since we had an appointment at Isfahan.

After Teheran, Isfahan is the largest town in Iran with a population of about 122,000. About one quarter of the inhabitants of Iran migrate twice a year between their summer and winter quarters, and this is the reason why the census varies so greatly. Isfahan, or Ispahan, is the ancient capital of Persia. It is an industrial centre and very prosperous indeed.

I was invited by the governor, Afshar Khan, to deliver a lecture in the Shah Pure School, on Women's Progress in the East, which I did. Officials and others

were present. The front seats were reserved for women, and the men took the back seats. This was the first mixed gathering of the kind in the history of Isfahan, and the governor was good enough to preside and introduce me to my listeners.

Later I was invited by the governor to attend a criminal trial. This was an unheard of procedure for a woman, so the governor's wife decided to accompany me. Although my command of the language was far from perfect I could follow the process well enough. That the accused was guilty there seemed little doubt, but it was urged in his favour that he had not used violence in the robbery, and that he had aided in the restoration of the stolen goods. There was only one thing he would not do, and that was to incriminate his alleged accomplice. This was serious, since the other man was believed to be a dangerous and notorious thief who had led the prisoner into evil, then leaving him to suffer alone. The prisoner, a small and sly-featured man, protested that he had planned the whole affair alone—whether from loyalty to his comrade or from fear of reprisal it was impossible to say. At length there was a consultation. I did not at the time know what it was all about, but I learned that the prisoner was asking first how many years he was going to get if he told the whole truth, how many years his companion would get if they caught him, and if anyone had ever escaped from the prison to which his accomplice would be sent. On learning that the man was already detained on suspicion, that he would get ten years, that no one had ever escaped from the prison, and that he himself would get only one year if he told the true facts, he made a concise and admirably worded statement, and the trial was brought to a close. It had been conducted very fairly, and though a Western mind would have found a good deal of fault with certain aspects of the

procedure, notably the undue reliance on documents and the lack of cross-examination for the defence, there could be no doubt that justice was done.

We delayed some little time at Isfahan to study the customs of the Bakhtiary tribe. They are essentially warriors, and are reputed to be the bravest of all the sons of Iran. The women are living Amazons, and they train their sons for fighting from early boyhood. Thus they grow up to be keen soldiers and ready volunteers in time of threat or danger to the tribe. They have a natural love of independence, and no sense of fear at all.

The Bakhtiaries acknowledge no authority other than that of their own chiefs. But the present Shah has made a treaty with them, giving them certain rights, and has, moreover, made Sardar Assad, one of their chiefs, his Minister of War. This tactful and far-seeing measure has consolidated the country's defence against possible aggression, and the tribe itself, having a stake in the country's progress, is completely loyal to the Shah.

The men wear wide trousers and long jackets of thick material of dark colour, reaching to the knees. They do not wear the Pahlavi cap. Their hats are after the fashion of the Egyptian fez, only higher and round at the crown, and are of various colours.

I remained in Ispahan for more than a month, during which time I visited all its famous antiquities and places of religious interest, eagerly drinking in the lore of ancient Persia. Favourite among my many discoveries was Chihili Settum, which means forty pillars, an historical building so named because, although it has only twenty pillars, their reflection in the pond close by is taken into account, thus making forty pillars in all. The finest view of the city is from Aly Kapu. This is the name of a building of seven storys resting on two columns, each forty metres

high. The paintings on the walls and ceiling are wonderful, but more of the authentic atmosphere of ancient times can be found at Cherar Bagh. This is an old yet beautiful building, a religious academy of the Shiahs—much the same as the Al Azhar University in Egypt. In its cloistered quiet the past seems very near.

The Jumma Masjid, or Friday Mosque, was an ancient Zorastrian or Parsee temple before the Muslim invasion. It was burnt—though not destroyed—by the Parsees before they left it to the Muslims, and signs of the burning can still be seen after all these years. Of less merit architecturally, but of greater superficial interest, is the shaking tower called "Manar Jumbam," which stands near a Mulla or Shaik tomb. It has two minarets, and if a person goes up one and shakes it from a small window, it begins to sway from one side to the other. At the same time the other minaret, of its own accord, moves in the same way. It is said that the grave close by is the tomb of a saint who performs this miracle. For my own part I felt that the best miracle the saint performed was getting me safely to earth once more.

From Isfahan we proceeded to Shiraz, two hundred miles to the south. The road seemed endless. Valleys, mountains and then valleys once more. Again and again we approached a river, whose rumblings and roarings we had heard from afar. These I felt were unhallowed regions.

At last we reached Shiraz, where we were met by the governor and entertained by him. Since he had heard that I was an Arab poetess, he suggested that, accompanied by the Director of Education, I should visit the tombs of those two great Persian poets, Sadi and Hafiz, which lie just a little distance outside the city, and place upon them a wreath of flowers. We accordingly set out for the spot, myself very

humble in the presence of the great ones of old. On the tomb of Hafiz some extracts from his famous work, the *Divan*, are engraved in the marble. Having asked a blessing on my pen, and having paid my tribute in flowers, I went back to lunch with the governor's two daughters, who teased their father unmercifully, saying that since meeting me they, too, would write poetry and set out to tour the world. The women, I found, all wanted contact with me because I had travelled. I was to them a symbol of their longings fulfilled. Contrary to custom, which does not allow them to enter such places as hotels, I was visited at my hotel, "Saadi," by some of the more enlightened and educated women of the city—which visit I hailed as indicative of a new and more broad-minded spirit in the East.

Having inspected the boys' and girls' schools, and having delivered several lectures, which were eagerly attended by hundreds of women of Shiraz, I felt that I had earned a holiday, so we drove to Band Amir, which is the name of the beautiful waterfalls near Shiraz.

This is another sight that no traveller in the delightful land of Persia should miss. There is a delicate beauty in the scene that will hold you enthralled. If you have the idea that one waterfall is very like another you will learn differently at Band Amir.

Perseopolis, in Greek, "the City of the Persians" or, to use its rightful name, Takut Jamshid (the Throne of Jamshid) was once the capital of the ancient Persian Empire. Here we saw the ruins of that city of long ago, and the sculptures representing men of the negroid type—woolly hair and thick lips—who must have been Africans or Kushit captives. They reminded me of the Baalabek representations in Mount Lebanon, and there were some similarities between them and the Luxor excavations in Egypt.

I would have liked very much to have made more detailed comparisons, but it was my fate at this period of my journey to have a time-table which somewhat enslaved me. I was expected to lecture in Bushire, and time was short.

I have already written of the perils of the mountain trails of Persia, but the journey to Bushire was along perhaps the most dangerous mountain roads in the world. They were extremely narrow, terribly steep, and with curves and zigzags so frequent that there was no time to steady the nerves between thrills. Purzen, Dukhtaren and Mulla Fifil are the most dangerous of the crossing points in that chain of mountains, but few sights in the world can compare with the view from the summit of the final pass. Never before had I seen such a precipitous descent into a valley, or such a riot of colour on sunkissed rock and shrub. Worn out with exhilaration of such travel, we broke journey at Kazaron, where yet another governor bade us welcome, and not till the following morning did we continue our journey to Bushire, crossing Yousif Khotal, so named after Yousif Khan, who first opened up that road across the hills.

In Bushire, the governor immediately placed his car at our disposal, this after he had paid us a visit at our hotel, the Cazaroni Rest House. He afterwards asked us to tea at his house, and all the officials and heads of departments were there to meet us. For some hours we discussed the position of women, and I did my best to make them see my point of view and win them over to the side of greater freedom for my sex.

I visited the Government schools and addressed the pupils; and also a Milly school for girls, where teachers and pupils were dressed in black, as it happened to be the "mourning month of the Mouharam." I was compelled to speak in Persian, for the Director

of Education was not allowed to enter with me for the purpose of translating my remarks, since the women were all in strict Purdah. When I came out I found that everybody was wearing black garments, and black banners hung from the windows. A big procession was anticipated because of the Mourham, when all lament for Hassain and Hussain, heroes of Islam, who met a tragic end. The mourners beat themselves with knives and chains, shouting: "Ya Hassain, Ya Hassain" till they reach the mosque, and anyone who dies from the self-inflicted beatings is counted a Shahid, or martyr. I had seen the ceremony in Zanzibar in 1930, and was glad that in Bushire it was stopped by order of the governor, who ran the risk of grave unpopularity on that account and was compelled to give permission for the beatings to take place in private.

Here in Bushire when once the festival was ended, all was order and neatness. At the aerodrome I saw constant arrivals and departures of passenger-'planes, while the hot, blue waters of the Persian Gulf were flecked with dazzling sails. I looked on the sea that was soon to bear me to India, and felt a sadness. Travelling through Persia, sometimes in haste and sometimes at leisure, I came to love that country as I have loved few others. When the edition of the local paper, *Abehdar Baradir*, asked me for a farewell message I wrote the usual word of thanks to his Majesty, the officials, and the many friends who had made my days so wonderful. But the words I wrote did little to express the gratitude and sorrow which overwhelmed my heart.

CHAPTER IX

IRAN

IN A PERSIAN GARDEN

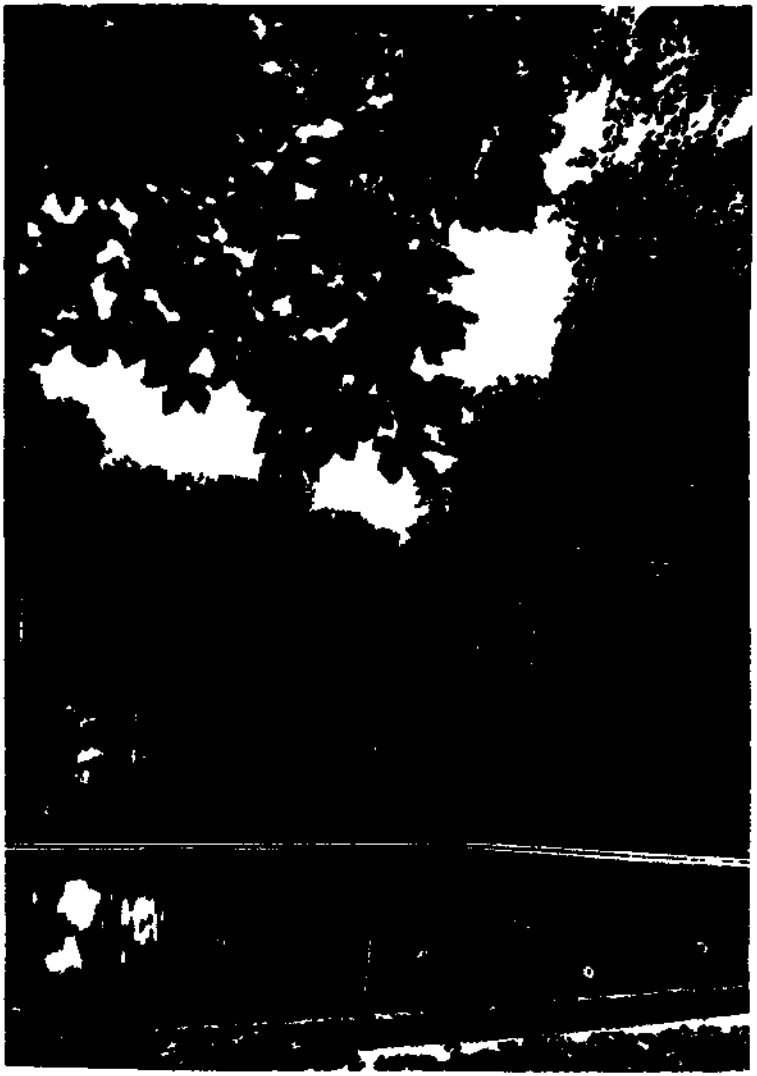
Last night I saw the crystal silver of moonlight
Cast on a million leaves in the Gardens of Iran,
And laughed, albeit with shame, as the memory smote me,
To think that a few hours since, in the burden of noonday,
I, who had now at my feet the riches of heaven,
Had fretted my heart for the loss of a silver coin.

Last night when the moon made a host of silver lances,
In garden and forest, I thought of a single spire
I had known in childhood, bright with the blessing of moonlight,
The pure white beauty of heaven bestowed in kindly glances,
By the Great Lord of Peace who dwells in glory there.

But then, as it chanced, in my dream my eyes were opened
And bright on the high curved mosque I saw the moon.
Nor was that silver less bright, nor its sheen less holy,
And with sudden shame I remembered that once in the burden of noonday
I, who had now before me the proof of God's wise charity,
Had spoken a slighting word of the faith of my Moslem friend.

THE history of Persia has been marked by invasion, revolution, and civil war, but there have been long periods of peace in which the arts have flourished. Changes of rule have been frequent, but often as the result of "palace revolutions," which led to no fighting and left the lives of the common people undisturbed.

The earliest inhabitants were of Sumerian stock, but on the fall of the Assyrian Empire the Medes submerged this ancient and primitive culture. Writing was now introduced, and the whole trend of life altered. Medea reached its highest power under Gaxares in 550 B.C., but there came a decline, and the people of Iran, a kindred Aryan stock, achieved ascendancy. Darius built anew the great Empire and vastly extended



In a Persian Garden [Photo. Fogg

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its limits, but Philip of Macedonia and his son, Alexander, the Great, humbled the might of Persia for two generations. With the recovery of independence on the fall of Alexander's mighty yet unstable dominion, came a period of dynastic changes. Selucid, Parthian, and Arsacid monarchs ruled in turn, till at length, two centuries before Christ, the Sassanian dynasty was established to endure until A.D. 651. Now came Islam, a terrific Arab invasion in the name of the Prophet, and for more than 500 years the land was beneath the rigorous but on the whole enlightened rule of the Caliphate. Subsequent invasions from the Mongols, Tamerlane, and his successors, bring the story down to the sixteenth century, when the Sufani dynasty established a hold on the country, only to be overthrown in 1722 by a revolt of the Afghans who had previously been conquered. The Turks now seized power, but only for a brief period, after which comes disintegration. Afghanistan and Baluchistan, fostered by Britain, achieved independence, and Russia, to the north, seized the province re-named Georgia—to-day an independent republic under the U.S.S.R. From 1795 onwards the Kajar dynasty struggles with a disordered country in which Russia and Britain, to name no other Western powers, attempt to exert influence. The intrigues are numerous and for the most part futile, but Persia is weakened by them and her power wanes. During the war of 1914 the land was not at first affected, but fear of Bolshevik penetration or the start of an Islamic "Jahad" had led to various British expeditions, none of which met with serious opposition. In 1925 the last of the Kajar Kings, Shah Ahmed Mirza, was deposed and the nationalist leader, Riza Khan, ascended to the throne.

The country was organised into four main provinces and twelve sub-provinces. Each province has a Governor or Lieutenant-Governor and final responsibility

rests with the Crown through the Minister for the Interior.

Scholarly friends of mine will laugh to scorn this attempt to compress the history of centuries into a few lines, but some sort of bird's eye view is essential to the understanding of a land, and I think that for those who read these pages with little knowledge of Persia the brief sketch may be useful.

Riza Khan contemplated a republic, but religious influences were against this course which must have weakened the hold of the priests upon the administration of the land since the throne and the Islamic priesthood were closely bound together by innumerable ties of ceremonial. An hereditary monarchy somewhat on constitutional lines was therefore established, and has functioned well.

Shahin Shah Iran, the present King of Persia, is the independent ruler of his country. His is a great kingdom which stretches from the Caspian Sea in the north, to the Persian Gulf in the south. His Majesty's title is "Shahin Shah"—"King of Kings."

His Majesty is a man of strong personality, whose quiet rule is evidence of the loyalty, admiration and affection with which he is held by his subjects. Here is a list of what he has done for his country.

The abolition of the extra-territoriality.
Compulsory military service.
Taxation of foreign goods, with a view to encouraging home products and industries.
Reform of the judicature and the law.
Construction of roads and railways.
Encouragement of national agriculture.
Establishment of the Milli and the Pahlavi banks.
Reorganisation of the army and gendarmerie.
Establishment of the navy and the air force.
Disarmament of warring tribes.
Erection of factories in important cities and towns.

Establishment of communications by telephone, telegraph and wireless.

Conversion of old weights and measures to the metric system.

Adoption of the gold standard, and amelioration of financial conditions.

Establishment of the Maflis Milli or the present Iranian Parliament.

Persian law is complicated by the fact that the code of State legislation is often at complete variance with that of Islam, which has behind it the strong forces of custom and superstition. This statement must not be interpreted as a stricture upon the Islamic sense of justice, which is, indeed, far better developed than most Western minds will admit; but the provisions of its code are clearly designed to govern the lives of desert peoples or of cities under traditional Caliphate rule and modern commerce and industry, which are everywhere spreading in Persia, are not easily controlled by such an instrument.

In the early years of this century it was laid down that all state law should be valid only if it did not run counter to the Mohammedan edicts, and to decide problems arising from this enactment it was provided that a group of learned doctors should examine all Government statutes on behalf of the Faithful, and that these authorities might declare unlawful anything which transgressed their religious code. As far as I could discover, however, it was extremely rare for the power of veto to be exercised. I could not learn of any matter of importance in which this had occurred, though it did seem that the emancipation of women might be prejudiced by religious control of law. I found, too, that the sessions of the Doctors of Islamic law had been irregular and had been less and less an influence as the years went on. But I was warned on no account to consider their

powers as vanished, for it is a property of all religions, and especially of Islam, to breed sudden revivals at periods of apparent acquiescence, and a wave of fervour in the common people might easily restore to the "Ulama" wide dictatorial powers.

With regard to foreigners and the law, I talked with many Persians who complained bitterly of extra-territoriality—that is, the right of trial by his own consular court which the foreigner at present enjoys. The same feeling was present in Egypt among the educated classes, and one of the most popular clauses in the treaty just concluded with Great Britain is that which states the willingness of the British authorities to support the Egyptian claim for the abolition of capitulations—as the old system is called. My Persian friends thus thought that I should be a ready listener to their grievances (for at this time there was as yet no Egyptian treaty, and the students in Alexandria were rioting against the British) but I felt bound to point out the other side of the case to them, which in justice I must say they received very well. Extra-territoriality is an ugly word, but though it has from time to time masked injustices, these have never, I think, been either widespread or grave. While the East as a whole has undoubted grievances against the invader from the West, the gains which have come from the foreign presence have been many and obvious, so the legal compromise which alone made them possible cannot be dismissed as unjust unless it can be shown that the native law has been so adapted and its administration so improved that it is ready to replace the Western codes.

Persia had every right to claim that this is so. I was immensely impressed by the police methods and by the air of justice and efficiency which pervaded police stations, courts, and prisons, and I was glad

that even while I was in Persia an agreement was come to with Great Britain by which the national courts assumed control of foreigners save in chancery cases and divorce.

His Majesty has subdued every rebel and robber in the country, thus making it safe not only for peaceful government but also for visitors and travellers and those who desire to settle down for business purposes. Outstanding questions between his countrymen and Europeans are settled by His Majesty himself, as also are misunderstandings that arise between one sect and another. Experts, mostly Germans, have been employed to plan and build roads and streets, and other important constructions throughout the land. Anyone now visiting Teheran, for instance, must think that he is in one of the European capitals, and the streets of even the lesser cities are now well paved and illuminated at night.

His Majesty takes a personal interest in the education of youth, visiting the schools, and occasionally examining the pupils himself. He often inspects the Army, and when he speaks to a soldier he addresses him as "Shuma," a term of respect. Every year, on the anniversary of His Majesty's triumphal entry into Teheran, the Persians celebrate the occasion with military manoeuvres, including an air pageant on impressive lines. This I have had the good fortune to witness. The Shah has a red tent in the open, from where he reviews his Forces. The horses are so well trained that when their riders salute His Majesty the animals do likewise by raising one of their forefeet.

Persia is improving in many ways—and so rapidly that the whole country prays for its monarch's long life. The Shah, indeed, is a ruler in whom are combined the qualities of a statesman and a humanitarian; and in all his measures he shows a common sense and broadmindedness that are truly laudable. He aims

at doing away with all those things in the country's customs and traditions which tend to constitute a barrier to her progress and advancement as a worthy member of the community of nations. As an example in point, the Persian woman had no right to walk on the footpath that the men used, the reason being that women were regarded as the inferior sex. Also, she had no right to ride in a carriage with her husband or her sons, or with her brother. If found in such circumstances, specially in Isfahan, she was liable to be beaten by the crowd. But to-day, under the rule of the present Shah, she has in all these respects perfect right and freedom. She can now attend meetings and conferences, actions unthinkable a few years ago. So it can be said with truth that—thanks to His Majesty—the Persian woman can take her place beside her sisters of the West, and that now at last she has been freed from the shackles of servitude.

The two most famous women's societies are the Wattan Khan Society, and the Sheer Kurshid Surkh Society; and their president is the Shah's daughter, Princess Shams Shah Dukht. All the societies and schools are under her royal patronage, and the schools are named "Shah Pur," after the Crown Prince, who is also encouraged by his father to uplift the new generation.

His Majesty frequently visits the state hospitals, and has always a word of encouragement for the doctors and the staff. I was told that the Shah inspects the linen, the instruments and the food supplied to the patients, and always touches the walls to make sure that they are free of dust.

National industries have received a great impetus through royal encouragement, and foreign goods are heavily taxed in order that the people may produce more of their own. In the town of Yazd, silk is manufactured and sent to Isfahan to be made into shawls, curtains, and so forth, in the Kalam Kar

printing factories. The Cazaroni Wool factory, in Isfahan, is large enough to supply the whole country. To encourage his people to buy more native goods, the Shah announced a date by which all European goods were to be replaced by Persian goods. That order was issued when I was in Teheran. We used to see the merchants in Lalszar Street selling their goods almost for a song, so to speak, in order to clear their stock in due time.

His Majesty has converted most of the Kajar palaces into Government administrative offices. The Museum of Gulistan was formerly a Kajar palace; so also was the small museum near the Ministry of Education. Shrimran Prison was once a resort of the famous Kajar Kings.

Besides the wool, cotton, silk and carpet factories, there are Arms factories—for the manufacture of guns, swords and ammunition. There are also china and glass works, as well as gold, copper and silver refineries. Lately His Majesty inaugurated two sugar factories in the capital, and five others have been built in other parts of the country. Scholars have been sent to different parts of Europe for specialised studies and training in agriculture, economics, medicine and chemistry; while many young men are training as pilots or have been sent to European military academies. When the Crown Prince was leaving the country for Europe his mother gave vent to tears, whereupon he requested her not to grieve, for he was going to be educated so as to return and be of help to his country.

There can be no doubt that the present ruler has brought to Persia the best features of European civilisation, so it is not to be wondered at that in Persia to-day you hear the people shout: "Zandabad Pahlavi arwahona fidah"—"Long live the King—we dedicate our lives to him!"

Persia is an exhilarating country. There is a fierceness which underlies all beauty. The climate, save for the exquisite spring, is spoiled by hot, dry winds, but in the short winter months it is extremely cold, and much snow falls. Though there is no big river at all there are a number of streams, some of which dry up during the summer, but become roaring torrents with the first rains. There are lowlands, where food products grow, and higher ground, which is pastoral country. The mountain ranges present unforgettable panoramas, the beauty of which once seen is for ever a treasure locked in the traveller's heart. Some of the ranges glow a deep red, others shine in the clear air with a sheen of celestial verdure, whilst others are covered with snow.

In ancient times Iran included the whole of the tableland bounded to the north by the valley plain between the Caspian and Aral Seas, to the south by the Arabian Sea, and eastwards by the Indus valley; while to the west the limits were marked by the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. Modern Iran, however, occupies only some 628,000 square miles, of which large areas are scarcely populated. In the north-east lie waterless deserts, and much of the coast line along the Persian Gulf is almost uninhabitable owing to the climatic conditions.

Difficulties of communication have always been considerable, and Iran has been shut off for long periods from the outside world.

There are four ways to Iran: Baghdad to Teheran; from India by way of the Persian Gulf; the direct route from Afghanistan; and from Russia southward from the Caspian Sea. Internal communications in Iran are poor, the roads being few and bad. The cities are surrounded by walls with gateways, and in most parts everything between one town or city and another is wilderness. The cities

and towns are few and far between, and the villages are scattered. Yet the traveller will always find the distant prospect full of life and movement because of the many Chai-Khanas (or inns) on the way, and the endless strings of the caravans. The usual vehicles are four-wheeled carts, drawn by donkey or camel. They appear from all directions, and though laden with heavy burdens climb the steepest mountain roads. The mail is now carried by motor van where formerly mules were used. Nowadays travelling by car is fairly easy and comfortable, but you must start early in the day so as to reach the next town before nightfall. The only places where you can break journey on your way, for food or drink, are the Chai-Khanas, where you can get every reasonable comfort.

The old religion of Iran, Zoroastrianism, named after Zoroaster its founder, was monotheistic and inculcated hospitality, philanthropy and benevolence. Its central idea is the contest between the forces of good and evil; or between light and darkness, personified as Ormuzd and Ahriman respectively. Light or good (Ahriman) is represented by fire and the sun, fire being the most important element. This is the religion of the present day Parsees of India, who are of Iranian stock and were formerly settled in Iran. The followers of Zoroastrianism are commonly known as fireworshippers. They do not bury their dead because the earth—one of the gifts of Ormuzd—would thereby be defiled; and they do not burn the dead for fear of defiling the sacred fire. So the corpse is exposed on towers called Towers of Silence, so that it may be devoured by birds of prey. The towers are round in shape with a little iron door leading to the stairs, at the top of which is a small opening leading to the terrace where the dead body is laid. In Teheran the tower is called Burge Khamoushan, and near the tower is a little waiting-room. I was told that the

relations of the deceased wait there, and every hour or so go to the top of the tower to see if the right eye has been eaten before the left; that would mean that the deceased is a pious person, whereas if the left eye was the first to be devoured it would mean that the person was a sinner, and that they must pray much for his sins to be forgiven.

The Zoroastrian priests are known as the Maji, but in Persian literature they are called Mobed or Mugh. Their sacred literature is contained in the Avesta, and is written in the most ancient form of the Iranian or Persian language, which is considered by some authorities on the subject to have been the language of the Medes. It is translated, with commentaries, into Pahlavi, the modern tongue.

The next religion chronologically, and perhaps the most important, is the faith of Islam, which came into the country with the Arab invasion in the Seventh century. This great religion, founded by Mohammed in A.D. 610, and established in 630 when he returned to Mecca as a conqueror and was recognised as Prophet by all Arabia, has many fine qualities and exerts immense power. Mohammed asserted the absolute unity of God—Allah—as opposed to the trinitarian conception of Christianity, and maintained that he was—like Moses and Jesus before him—an emissary of God. Submission to the will of Allah is all-important; hence the faith is called Islam (submission), and a follower a Moslem (Muslim, submitting). The Koran is the Islamic Bible.

The Moslem world is divided into two main sects—Sunnites and Shiites. The former accept as authoritative not only the Koran but also the Sunna or tradition. The Shiites reject the Sunna and maintain that the first three Caliphs, the successors of the Prophet, were not validly elected. The logical aspects of this schism are of great interest, and can be compared

SHEEP SHEARING IN KHASVIN, IRAN

THE GOVERNOR OF MOSUL, THE BISHOP OF THE ASSYRIANS AND TWO CHALDEAN PRIESTS AT THE HILLSIDE MONASTERY IN THE IMADAYAT MOUNTAINS, IRAQ

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with profit to those underlying the dissensions in Christianity, but the question is too big for discussion here. It must suffice to say that the Shiah sect is most powerful in Iran.

A modern Persian faith deserves mention. The Babi or Bahais are an Iranian religious sect, founded in 1843 by Bad-ed-Din, "Gate of the Faith," another of his titles being Hazrati Ala, or His Supreme Highness. The Bab maintained that his was a universal religion representing the fulfilment and completion of all the ancient faiths, reconciling them in their rivalries and freeing them from the rigidity of dogma and ritual. His religion is based on Islam, but it rejects many of the tenets and practices of the orthodox Moslem. Though the Bab was executed by the Persian authorities in 1850, the sect has still many adherents in Asia and North Africa, in Europe and even the U.S.A.

The story goes that there was a Shah of Persia who visited England and was asked by a lady in Manchester: "Is it true that in Persia you worship the sun?" "Yes, madam," he replied, with a glance at the grey heavens, "and so would you if you had ever seen him."

Well, once in Persia I worshipped the sun. I will tell the whole story.

Once in the hills around Mount Damarvand we had a strange experience. I forget now by which road we had gone or how we came to lose the way, but all at once it began to snow and our progress was slowed to a crawl. There were precipitious crags towering above us, while even more sheer was the drop beyond the edge of the road; and visibility was essential if we were not to go crashing to our death on the rocks below.

After a few hours we found that we could go no farther. Though it had ceased to snow there had been

a heavy fall on the upper slopes and now the bitter wind was piling the white drifts high along the twisting trail. Also it was getting rapidly darker, and we knew that to be caught by nightfall in the mountains would be serious. So when we skidded round a bend to find another Chai-Khana we decided to stop there the night to see if morning would bring a change in the weather. It was a deserted spot and there was little accommodation for guests. Only one room was available, and round the huge stove in its centre we huddled. There were seven of us in all, and the proprietor, who cooked strange dishes from time to time, was a thoroughly villainous-looking fellow who looked as though knifing came natural to him. He had, we found later, a heart of gold. The wind howled among the mountains and the snow forced its way beneath the door. The cold seemed a human enemy whose advance from the outer walls must be repelled by physical effort; whenever the stove slackened the cold crept closer to our huddled forms. I was the only woman—the rest were uncouth muleteers. How should we pass the time? One man broke into a song, and the others chanted the burden. I wished very much to get to know the words, but could not catch more than an occasional phrase.

"My love is whiter than lilies and sweeter than roses her breath. . . ."

Then came the refrain:

We shall be married, yes, we shall be wed.
I will throw the cotton-seed upon her e'er I take her to my bed."

This was, of course, an allusion to the wedding custom I have already recounted—which is intended to produce fertility. Suddenly there was a dispute, and as far as my brother and I could make out it

concerned me. One of the men had protested that a certain stanza was too indelicate to sing in my presence. Another resented this aspersion of his good taste and was ready to defend his honour with blows. I intervened. "It was a very fine song," I said, "and I thank you, but do not come to blows in my presence. Surely no verse of the song can be as indelicate as that!"

My language was understood, and there were smiles. My brother called for tea for the company. "Now," I said, "it is my turn to entertain you. I will tell you a story!"

The tale which I chose was "Bluebeard," and truly I could not have made a better choice. Even though my language faltered their interest did not. The suspense appealed to them and they relished the conclusion.

All at once we noticed that the wind had dropped. "That is the end of the storm," growled one of the muleteers. "They do not last for long at this season. . . . Come, let us have a look outside."

We went to the door which, when we pulled it open, let fall a drift of feathery snow upon the threshold. Outside the moon and the stars shone down on whiteness more than angelic, an ineffable purity of radiance such as the mystics of old descried around the throne of God. The hills were not hills; they were great altars to the infinite, with diamond and silver glittering upon the snowy altar cloths. Then from the north came a breath of warm air. We were thousands of feet up, and all around were snowdrifts, but now came the perfume of flowers. The frosty night was miraculously transfigured. For a moment I thought that I heard a burst of birdsong from the bare white mountain side. Then I knew it was just a tinkling of bells somewhere in the valley, a thin yet very lovely sound, which the swelling emotions of my heart had magnified. The scent of roses and spring gardens was gone in an

instant. The cold was around me again and it seemed that the warm breath from the valleys was only a dream. But the mule-men were jubilant. "No more storm," one called—who had climbed a steep rock to view the southern horizon. "And here is the dawn."

"The dawn, O Master of the World—the Persian dawn!"

First it was as though the light from the stars were dulled—like a steel blade on which a man has breathed. Then low down between two white crests I saw another whiteness. It grew in breadth and in intensity and the hills seemed to shiver and tremble as though that silent radiance were a great organ note swelling to a climax. The climax came. Bronze, sharp as a clash of cymbals, and then a vast outpouring of white gold. And even while the eye was staggered by this wonder I saw that the gold was not alone, that riding the sky above it were a host of streaming banners, tattered reds and purples of an army of angels of light.

Now all the snows were shot with colour, and the huge shadows in the valleys were changed from black to living blues and greens like the shifting glories of a dark sea. The muleteers shouted like boys set free from school, my brother was singing an air of the Paris opera: down on the trail our driver was swinging the handle of our car and cursing with joyous abandon. At that moment I felt that I had lived through so fine an improvisation of poet Nature that I could never be satisfied again with human song. Then came the sun—and I knew why men in Persia came to worship it. It was the gold of Paradise, pure as diamond, rich as cornlands, rounded into a flawless perfection of which the radiance spread out to all created things.

CHAPTER X

MEMORIES OF IRAN

"When days, like merchants from the East,
Bring each rare offers for life's feast,
Remember while the senses burn—
With youth for coin we make return."

I WAS once sitting in the kitchen of a Persian house while the daughters of the family were baking. Just as the first batch was coming hot from the oven the younger girl, with a peal of delighted laughter, seized two loaves which were joined together and threw them straight at her sister's head. Her sister ducked and the loaves fell to the floor, where they rolled over still clinging together. The girls were jubilant. "That means she will soon marry," cried the young one. "If the loaves stick together that means a wedding for her." I laughed with them, wondering did they really believe that the future could be told by such a means. After careful observation of the Persian women I have come to the conclusion that they both believe and disbelieve at the same time. One part of their mind can reason as to the unlikelihood of their many superstitions, but the beliefs are in their very blood, and they cannot do without their constant omens, auspices, tokens and lucky charms.

One evening we saw for the first time the thin slip of a new moon riding like a silver ghost ship low down on a sea of purple dusk where there sparkled a few waves of dark yet bright-rimmed cloud. "Dear friend," said my hostess, "please find me a jet black crow."

"Why?" I asked. "Whatever for?"

"That our eyes may meet—the crow's and mine, and I may have good luck as long as the moon lasts."

We searched a long while for a crow, but darkness was against us, so we gave it up. I learned that if the crow looks you straight in the eyes at the first glimpse of the new moon it is the best of omens, but if the bird averts its eyes means must be sought to ward off some evil which threatens. One friend of mine whom a crow had "cut dead" as you English would say, rushed to an astrologer to learn what comment might be had from the stars. The astrologer charged her the equivalent of five shillings and said that if she went out of doors after moonrise for seven days she would lose all her beauty through illness. One day she was hurrying home but was too late, and just as she crossed the threshold the upper horn of the silver crescent showed above the cypresses. My friend was inconsolable till I had summoned the astrologer. What must she do, she implored him, that her beauty might be saved. He reassured her saying that there was still a way to avert the evil. She must get a number of mirrors and sit among them. Then if an evil spirit approached he would be puzzled by the many figures he would see, and not knowing which to strike would return having abandoned his mission. This must be done at midnight for three nights running, after which the danger would be past.

The wife did as she was told—this advice, by the way, cost ten shillings—and as she had not enough mirrors, borrowed them from neighbours. As I left I saw the mirrors being carried in.

Life is very complicated when there are signs to be observed. I could understand an astrologer being consulted before a journey of some length was undertaken, but when the stars were besought for advice concerning the putting on of a new dress I felt that they were being taken far too seriously; and I sometimes found that it was almost impossible to gather any large party of women for a meeting since each

wished it to be held on her lucky day, and there seemed to be as many lucky days as there were women. The astrologers, I am convinced, are not frauds, cheating a credulous public. They are convinced of the usefulness of their activities. One day I was in the house of a State official and we had planned a picnic to the hills, but on the morning just before our departure the telephone rang. It was the astrologer. He was, I gathered, very excited. Never had there been so fortunate a conjunction of the heavenly bodies. Now was the time for my friend to seek advancement in the capital. Let him not delay one instant. Till the noon hour to-morrow the stars in their courses were his allies. He must go to Teheran and request an interview with his superiors. They would refuse him nothing.

We were disappointed that our excursion should be cancelled, for the wife would not think of leaving without her husband; but she did not mind at all, thinking only of the rapid promotion which was to be theirs, for she would share socially in her husband's rise to power.

Jokingly I pretended to be sceptical, saying that the husband had not wanted to be taken picnicking and had bribed the astrologer to provide an excuse for him. But my jest was received with indignation.

"Well," I said, as my friend was leaving, "though I cannot find it in my heart to wish you anything but success, which you richly deserve, I could almost hope that you do not achieve it to-day since then you will realise the folly of this star gazing." But, much as it irks me to put the fact on record, the official did meet with success. They granted all his requests, as the astrologer had predicted. As a reward for this timely advice a handsome gift was made to the watcher of the stars.

The women of Persia are beautiful, and their dress, which conceals their beauty, adds an air of mystery

to the simplest of their comings and goings. On the last Friday of the blessed month of Ramadan they dress superbly and anoint themselves with rare perfume. Their best ornaments and jewellery are set upon their persons, and hands and toes are tipped with crimson. They then repair to the mosques where each woman lights twelve tapers. If a taper goes out there is consternation, but there is sheer panic if by an oversight one of them is not lighted. Women are not allowed to join in public prayer at the mosques, and are segregated from the male congregation, being merely onlookers. That day, always at their homes and never at the mosque, they have to perform their private devotions twice, however, according to a carefully prescribed form. The great thrill of the day comes when they are leaving the mosque. All the young men have preceded them and are crowding around the entrance. One by one as the unmarried women emerge they lift their veils. Excitement surges through the onlookers. Many men choose their wives at that moment, going afterwards to request an interview with the parents. Should an angry husband keep his wife indoors on that day he will forfeit irredeemably his right to Paradise.

I asked an Imam why women were prohibited from engaging in worship with their menfolk, and was rebuked for my stupidity. "It is written that no man may serve God and Woman," he said. I have not been able to trace this aphorism in any of the Islamic writings known to me, and I have more than a suspicion that a good many priestly utterances are prefaced by an authoritative "It is written . . . " just to give them more weight. But it cannot be denied that the Koran is very strict against women being even near a man at a time of worship, a delicate compliment when you come to think of it, to the power which women possess of disturbing the weaker sex.

I found the women of Persia excellent housewives and though their intelligence is unbelievably corrupted by crude superstition, it remains surprisingly shrewd. One woman I knew—and I am sure that the custom is general—would rise in the middle of the night and place a key in the volume of the Koran which lay beside her bed. This was done in black darkness. In the morning the verse on which the handle of the key rested was considered to hold the clue to the solution of any difficulty which she had been pondering overnight. Now one day she showed her husband the key resting on a text in the Koran which charges all husbands to treat their wives with honour and provide them with what robes are necessary to their station in life. This she maintained was a sign from Allah that her wardrobe was to be replenished. The husband pointed out that it so chanced that the text was at the top of a page and that the key had been placed upside down. He reversed the key, the handle of which then rested upon a text adjuring a husband not to be swayed by the chatter of women. "That is the right way to place the key," he said. "But," protested the wife, "if the handle is always to be placed thus it can never rest upon that text at the top of the page."

"Exactly," said her husband, "that was doubtless the will of Allah!"

Not only the Koran is considered to have this power of revealing truth and giving advice. The poems of Hafiz Shirayi are credited with similar power—on the lines of the "sortes Virgiliani" of the Roman world. But poetry is capable of such varied interpretations that it always appeared to me that the women read into the discovered verse their own previously conceived intentions.

The women of Persia have few amusements but a fascinating social life centres round the public baths.

I attended the baths or Hamam on many occasions, and delighted in the informal gaiety with which the women mingle. If it is true that much scandal is talked on these visits, I can only say that it never seemed to do anyone the least harm, for though they seemed to vie with one another in aspersing the morals of their neighbours, these seemed to regard the enormities attributed to them as compliments, indicating their ability to handle their menfolk and do as they pleased.

In entering the Hamam various customs must be observed. At the doorway of the hot room a woman will always crack a few walnuts with the heel of her shoes. Then she goes barefoot to the basin where subtle and odoriferous essences are mingled according to recipes of great antiquity. When ablutions are ended most delicious dishes are handed round. All kinds of candies, sweet lettuce, sugar plums, dried fruits and plump raisins, are taken to the baths to be eaten after bathing, while sherbet is the usual drink. Attar of roses is the most favoured of the perfumes used in quantity, but rich women add always their own secret essence to the water.

The bath is a large, stone-floored room, well lighted and with an arched roof. A large basin is sunk into the floor round which there are stone steps where bathers may recline. They tell humorous stories as they lie in the heavily scented warm air. Sometimes they will sing to the accompaniment of a "dyra" (or tambourine) and after bathing they will smoke their kalyoums.

Before her wedding day it is most important that a girl should visit the baths with her family and friends, and after her wedding, on her first visit to the Hamam, it is highly desirable that the candles lit at the nuptial feast shall be taken into the chamber

and lighted there. Then she will surely have a child who will live in splendour.

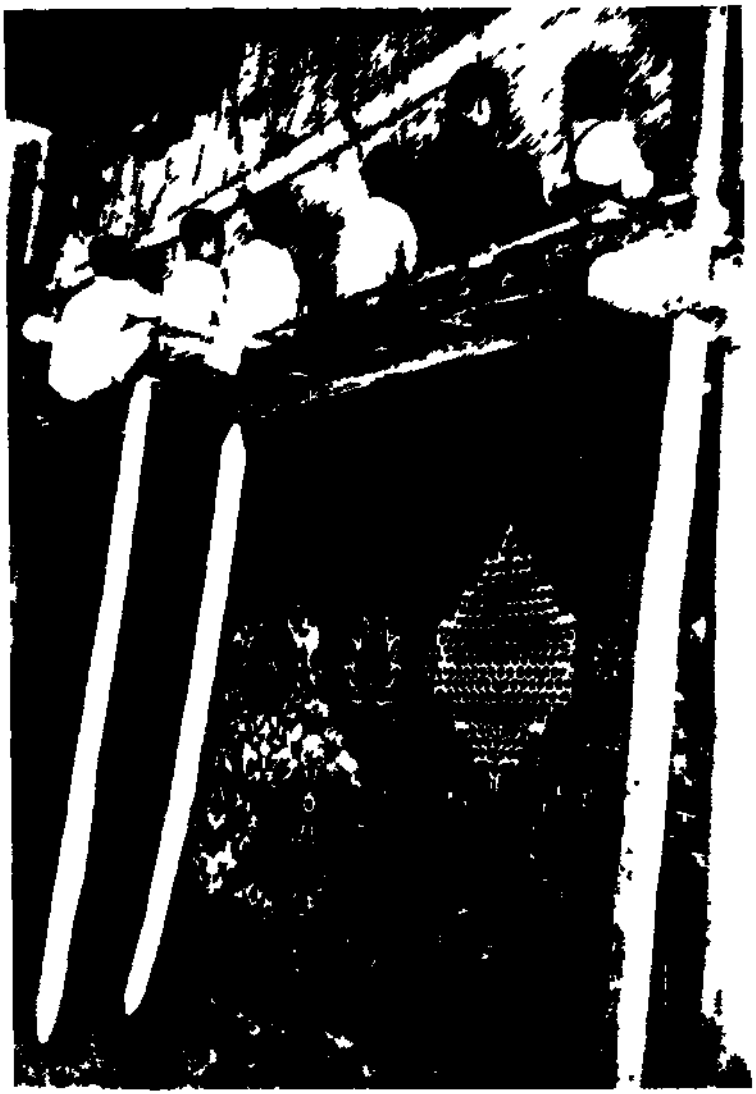
When a woman enters the bath an attendant comes with the kisa, a small sack made of goathair which just fits the hand. The body is rubbed all over with this till it glows with a sense of health. Some women use delicate soaps for the hair, but those who can afford it use always the yolk of eggs. This is by far the best treatment for the scalp in my opinion. The yolks should be beaten into a frothy soap.

Many enjoyable hours have I spent with my friends in the baths, which are a charming institution. The informality of the atmosphere induces a frankness of speech, and many are the confidences exchanged. Men shake their heads and say that mischief is brewed in these places, and as far as I am concerned this was undoubtedly true, for quietly and persistently I spread the doctrines of feminine emancipation, and nowhere did I find such attentive listeners as at the baths.

Everywhere I saw signs of women's progress in education and of the new status they have acquired in the social world. European modes of dress have not, however, destroyed national characteristics in their costume. The Chedar, or robe, somewhat like the Egyptian habaza, is worn when they go out, though at home they wear European dresses. In Teheran the more highly-connected women wear the piche or peak which is made of horse-hair. It is black in colour and shades the eyes without covering the face. When they see a stranger they pull down the piche and cover the lower part of their faces with the chedar. In Isfahan the dress is the same except that the cover of the face is quite different: instead of the piche, a long white veil is worn, with small holes for the eyes to see through. It is worn with the ordinary chedar, and underneath black trousers are worn which are attached to the stockings.

This is the old Persian dress that is only seen to exist in Isfahan and Shiraz. Certain tribes, like the Bakhtiaris, have no "purdah," or veil to cover the face. They wear a wide skirt with a black jacket over it, and a long veil-like wrapping over the head, with many jewels and ornaments over the forehead. The Kashkai tribes, on the other hand, have still another different way of dressing. A woman wears six or seven wide skirts and a silk blouse, with a turban over a veil that hangs from head to knee. Every tribe has its own style of dress, and since I have had photographs of myself taken in some of the different fashions of the country I will leave these to speak for themselves.

No doubt the mixture of Arab and Persian blood, which took place after the Moslem invasion, has played its part in producing the Iranian type of to-day; and the Arabic language and literature has doubtless done much, also, to change the outlook of the country—particularly that of the intelligentsia. Persian art and literature are known and appreciated to-day among all classes of the people, who are charming and cultured, the man in the street being able to hold his own in learned company. Their innate refinement makes itself felt as soon as you come in contact with them, for they have a stock of poems and quotations from their famous authors with which they embellish conversation, though always quite naturally and never just for effect. They are exceedingly kind and hospitable to strangers, who are soon made to feel at home; and they are perhaps a little too generous in some ways. For instance, if you admire anything belonging to a Persian, it is somewhat disconcerting to be told: "Mali Shumast" i.e. it is yours—no matter what its value may be. Perhaps the truest sign that their good qualities go deeper than the surface is their kindness to their



CHILL WORKERS IN A TEXAS CAROLE FACTORY

servants, whom they always address as "Bacha," or "children."

One other element in the national character won my admiration. The Persian is a fatalist in time of hardship or danger. He will, without complaint or murmur, bear pain and discomfort; and this I had many opportunities of observing, for travel brought many times of test both to my brother and myself and our travelling companions.

The dress of the upper-class Persian man became Westernised a long time ago, especially in Teheran, the capital. The old peasant dress is fast disappearing in town and city. Uniforms and European suits are worn. But the law makes compulsory the wearing of the Pahlavi cap. This is worn by the Shah who created the fashion. It is a kind of casket or ordinary pill-box hat, about six inches high, with a small peak; the colour of it varies. Only the Mullas, Imams and others of the religious vocation are exempted from wearing the Pahlavi, or national cap, which must be distinguished from the tarboosh, a truncated cone with no peak, and the turban which is similar to the Indian head-dress of that name.

Moving among the people as one of themselves I was able to observe their family life at close quarters. In Shiraz I was invited to attend the ceremonies of betrothal. First we went to the bridegroom's house to fetch the bridegroom's mother, after which we went with a party of her woman friends to see the bride. All the bride's relatives came to greet us, and the bridegroom's mother was escorted into an inner room, where the bride awaited her. She was seated on a high platform and opposite her was a big basket full of coloured sugar. On approaching the bride the future mother-in-law took from a silken satchel the box containing the ring which she was offering on behalf of her son, and wrapping it

in a gaily coloured handkerchief placed it in the basket. She then went closer and kissed the bride, afterwards taking up the ring and placing it upon her finger. She then offered as a present several beautiful pieces of silk and cloth. The bride's mother now placed in the basket a handful of salt which I was told would be put under the mother-in-law's mattress the night of the wedding. If this was done, they said, there would never be any quarrel between the bride and her mother-in-law.

We now heard shouting and singing outside the house, and saw that the bridegroom had arrived with a number of jovial but very pleasant mannered men friends who were congratulating him. He was ushered into the men's quarters of the house and did not see his bride. Had they met accidentally it would have been regarded as a very serious omen. While the bridegroom and his friend were in the house the two fathers were together in another room for the signing of the marriage agreements which the attorneys to the two families had carefully prepared. Music was now played, and fruits and sweets were handed to us all.

Suddenly the music ceased and the bride's father stepped forward to announce amid great acclamation that a date had been fixed for the ceremony. When this was announced all the guests broke into a very gay but graceful dance. I went with some of the ladies to another room, and there we all sat at a round table under which was placed the fire. Servants placed cushions for us to sit on and then spread thick and richly woven woollen quilts over the table, drawing them right up to us so that our feet were hidden. This is known as the "kursi," and is a device for enabling the ladies of the house and their women guests to keep warm without any violation of the dictates of modesty, for under cover of the quilts we were able to draw up our dresses a little and toast our toes.

In Hin[illegible] D[illegible]
[illegible]

In Bal[illegible] Dress
[illegible]

Kurandé [illegible] Isfahan

In Sind[illegible] D[illegible]

[illegible]

That night the bride was attended by her mother and friends, who placed a lighted candle before her and a mirror, also a tray bearing ambergris tapers, various perfumes, some arzen, dried dates and sugared fruits. These are all required by very ancient custom. One of the women now recited some stanzas of a sacred book while others threw over the bride a green veil which enveloped all her person. She remained silent throughout all this, for speech was strictly forbidden her. Under cover of the green veil the bride was now undressed and left to sleep with the candle burning beside her.

Marriage always follows swiftly upon betrothal, and is celebrated with the usual rites of the Mohemmedan faith, but the nuptial night is regulated by many strange observances. It must be explained that there are two words which recur constantly in Persian conversation concerning their customs. The first is "wajib" which means "of good omen"; the second "sunnat," which means "right and proper." It is wajib, for instance, for the bride's mother to be present in the house on her daughter's marriage night and to escort the bride to the nuptial chamber. Meanwhile the husband waits outside surrounded by the women friends of the bride, who often mock him unmercifully. When at last the husband is permitted to enter he finds that his bride has been prepared for the night. He is seated beside her and then her right leg is lifted and placed upon his left one, and her right hand is also placed upon his left hand. The feet and hands of the married couple are now washed in scented water, after which the bridegroom prostrates himself twice in prayer. Rising he scatters cotton seed over the bride's head. All then look out of the window to see if any clouds may be seen, for should it rain on the bridal night good fortune and great prosperity will attend the couple. It is most

important that their feet should be washed in the same bowl, according to Iran customs, though in India each washes the feet of the other. Aromatic seeds are now placed in their mouths that they may be sweet to each other, and next a mirror is placed before them into which both must gaze. It is thought that this ensures a mingling of their spirits, for as the two reflections come together so must their souls. While they gaze into the glass a surat of the Koran is read, after which music is played and the women, break into song. This is to drive ill-fortune from the chamber. Only when all these ceremonies have been observed with the utmost exactitude do the guests and members of the two families retire, the bride's mother being the last to leave.

On the following morning the happy pair are often awakened by song, and later in the day dances and music are performed before them. The bride's first meal is sent to her by her mother, who has cooked it in her own home and behind a screen so that no eye may fall upon it save hers. Often as a means of ensuring that the first child shall be a son a few cooked seeds flavoured with camphor and rose water are given to the bride. I could add many more strange details did space allow, but strange to say I could not always discover the reasoning which lay behind the actions. Often I think it has been almost forgotten. Modern science, with all its convenient inventions, has invaded Persia, and everywhere the latest devices are being installed, but the old superstitions seem to flourish happily beside the scientific apparatus of the twentieth century and no one notices the incongruity.

Birth, like marriage, is hedged about by strange observance and superstition. Wolfs' claws and tigers' claws with strips of lizard skins are tied round the neck of a newly born child to ward off the evil eye.

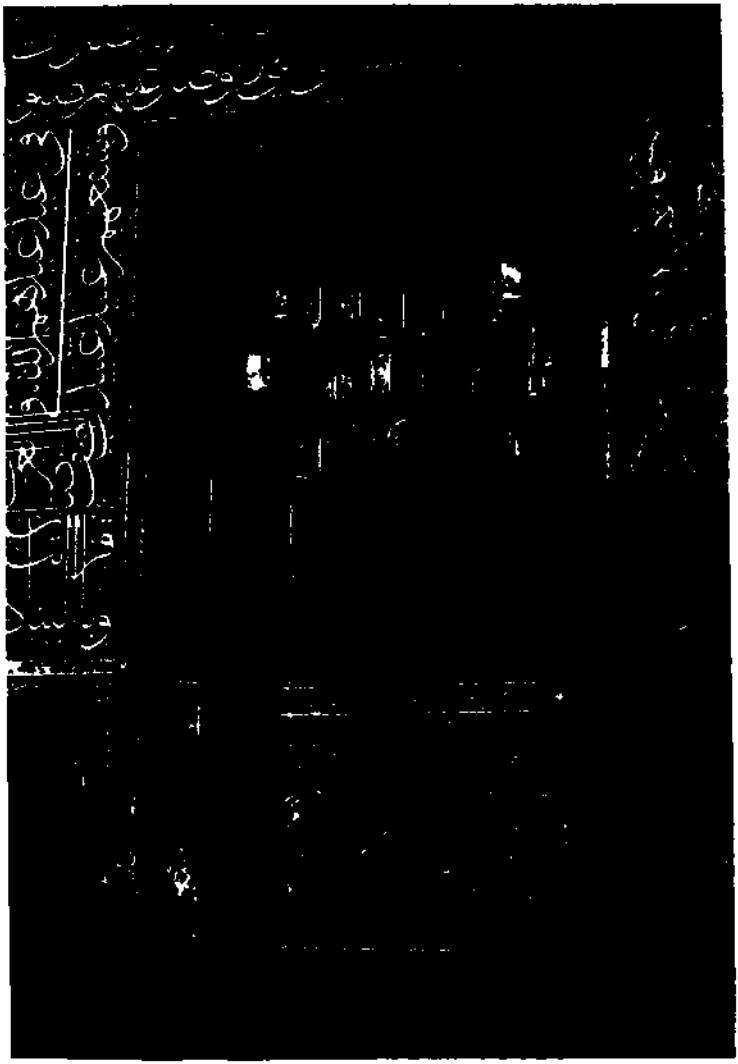
Faith in charms thus starts at the earliest age and continues throughout life. The gravest of state officials will sometimes break off a conversation to perform some childish action based on the lore of charms. I was once talking to a schoolmaster when he said suddenly: "Excuse me, my hand is itching," after which he signalled to one of the young boys in his care to come to him. The signal was misunderstood, and the wrong boy came. "Not you, Sorahb," said the master "your lazy cousin." Then he turned to me. "It would not do to ask Sorahb," he said. "You see, his parents are dead." I was quite mystified, nor was I much more englightened when the right boy approached the master, who rubbed his itching palm upon the little fellow's head. "Now I shall have money," said the master. "You will see—before the week is out I shall have money."

"You cannot be serious," I said. "Oh yes," he answered, "who could be anything but serious in these hard times when it is a question of money."

The same man suffered from sore throat, probably as the result of using his voice too much to abuse his pupils. Every year, I was told, on the night of Nau-roz—the Persian festival of the New Year, some of the holy bread of Ramazan was placed by him on his table during the night. The next day the bread was soaked in water and eaten with the flesh of a kid newly-slain. When this was done he would say with relief: "Now I shall have no more pain in my throat for the coming year." Of course since his school was at a very dusty street corner and since he was always loudly reproving one or other of his charges—to do him justice he was at heart a kindly man and much loved—it would not be long before his throat was as sore as ever. Nevertheless, he strictly maintained the custom. I liked him, and was very sympathetic concerning his afflictions

which I determined to cure. I therefore gave him some tablets (which I said were an ancient Egyptian recipe) with instructions to put them in his mouth only at an odd number of minutes past an even hour or an even number of minutes past an odd hour. This, I felt, would enable him to take them as required while still feeling that he was observing some very mysterious and efficacious ritual. The tablets did his throat a great deal of good, so I can only conclude that by a piece of good luck I stumbled upon the necessary formula. I herewith record it for the benefit of all who have occasion to take iodine lozenges.

The schoolmaster's wife had her own particular set of prohibitions which I made careful note of, since I found they were largely shared by her neighbours. On Sundays and Tuesdays neither linen nor cotton nor any earthen vessel might be brought into the house: nor on those days must the sick be visited. On Wednesday no lamp should be lit inside the house, and on Friday neither wood nor bread should be received into the actual house premises for consumption though it was allowable to place the wood in an outer store. On Friday neither household furniture nor apparel may be washed, for if they are they will fade or rot. Wednesday night is generally speaking unlucky for the paying of visits to your friends, but every household appeared to have its own lucky and unlucky days for the reception and departure of guests, calculated, of course, by the astrologer. If you come from any distance to the house of your friend it is not etiquette to stay for less than three days, and you may stay for more at your own option, since unlimited hospitality is a custom widely observed. From Tuesday night to Friday night is a particularly auspicious three days for a visit. On the first night a banquet is always given in honour of the guest, and when he has eaten



DOORWAY OF PERSIAN MOSQUE SHOWING WRITING FROM THE KORAN

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his fill it is "wajib" for the host to take up three or four large morsels of meat and present them to the guest with his own hands. The guest must eat whether he wishes or not, and should he be quite unable to get the pieces down everyone cries out delightedly that there must be another banquet to-morrow night. The Persians are charming and warmly hospitable hosts. "Kush Armadid" says the hostess when you enter; that is, "You are welcome," and should you chance to admire any ornament or similar object your host will say: "Mali Shumast"—"It is yours." One friend of mine would always call her daughters when I arrived and bid them play the dyra in my honour, and I several times saw this done in other households on the arrival of a friend after a journey.

In Persia the fact that I could lay claim to the title of poetess (no matter how little the grounds of my claim) won me honour and kindness everywhere. Only one governor grunted disapproval when he heard that I wrote poetry. "The last poet we had here made an abominable nuisance of himself," he said. "He started an agitation against the petrol concessions, wrote that oil was the water of the devil and accursed. He caused all manner of trouble. We banished him in the end, but the foolish women were all so under his spell that they sold their jewels to give to his cause, and when he died—a natural death, I assure you, which proves the wisdom of Allah—they set up a monument in his memory."

"Ah, well, I am a woman," I said, "so when the time comes for a monument to me I hope the men will subscribe."

And when I said this the Governor, whose gruffness had been assumed only in jest, swore that he would be the first subscriber.

I found the officials of the country determined to combat to the uttermost the reputation which the

East has acquired of being utterly corrupted by bribery, extortion, and injustice. The new penal code is being administered not only with efficiency, but in the right spirit, while Western ideas of prison reform have been adapted to Persian needs. In some respects. Indeed, the best European models have been surpassed.

Mahbas Shimran, the famous prison, was (as I have mentioned), once one of the Khajar palaces. It is a beautiful building and no tourist should fail to see the excellent apartments given to the prisoners and the comfortable and well-equipped workrooms where they receive instruction in trades of different kinds. In one department, for example, some are taught how to make carpets, whilst in another carpentry is taught. All the police hats are made in the prison, where is also woven the material that is used for the police and the army uniform. The teachers, wherever possible, are selected from among the prisoners themselves. There are also classes of a literary nature. I saw the prisoners sitting on the floor, with their books and inkstands before them. During our inspection of the prison we were especially surprised to see how skilfully the prisoners worked in making carpets. An instructor was behind each two men, telling them how many stitches to put in and what colours to use for the design. The Egyptian minister, Moufty El Gaszairly Bey, who was with our party, was astonished to see how beautiful the patterns were. He takes a keen interest in Persian carpets, and I used to say to him that, if ever he was lost, we would no doubt find him in a carpet shop. Most of the things made by the prisoners are sold to visitors, the price being divided between the authorities and the prisoners, whose families get a one-third share.

From the carpet section we went round the prison hospital. Each disease has its own ward. There

are hot and cold baths as well as shower-baths, and hygiene is rigorously prescribed. The governor of the prison allows the prisoners the best of food—better, in fact, than they have at home. We inspected the kitchen to see how the meals are prepared, and when we tasted some we found it was delicious.

The governor took us to see the prison museum, where the weapons and tools found upon the prisoners are exhibited. There were many different kinds of revolvers, daggers, rope ladders, counterfeit coins and bank-notes and the apparatus or plant used to make them, while on the walls hung the photographs of the murderers whose victims had been famous people, sometimes, indeed, a king.

The grounds round the prison are used to teach the prisoners how to cultivate their own plots of land when they leave, and are splendidly maintained. Everywhere we found comfort and good order. Many political prisoners have nicely-furnished private rooms. There is something to the credit of this prison that is worthy of mention: a few years ago four American tourists visited it, and, impressed by the comfort of the prisoners and the excellent food, asked to be allowed to spend a few days as inmates of the prison. The request was granted, so they signed their names in the prisoners' book and stayed four days. They are reported as having said that this prison is better than the best hotels.

That, perhaps, is somewhat a "tall" story with which to end these rather rambling memories of one of the happiest journeys of my life, but if what I have written has made my readers realise that Persia is a country no traveller should omit to visit I shall feel that I have done something to repay the many kindnesses which were showered upon my brother and myself during our wanderings through that enchanted land.

CHAPTER XI

ETHIOPIAN JOURNEY

It is strange to reflect that when I first gathered together the notes which are the basis of this chapter Ethiopia was an almost unknown country, and that now, when my travels are only recently ended and my book only just completed, everything is changed. I had thought that my journey to Addis Ababa and my description of all I saw on the way there and in my modest explorations of some of the lesser known byways, would be a chapter of especial interest, dealing in so far as the average European was concerned with utterly unfamiliar scenes. It was true that the coronation of His Majesty Haile Selassie, at which I was present in November, 1930, was witnessed by a great crowd of sightseers, many of them the dignitaries of foreign lands; but for the most part they came just "to see the show," and scrambled back on to the Rhinoceros Express for Jibuti as soon as it was over. I went to collect every scrap of information that I could lay hands on concerning the last free African realm.

When I was received in private audience by the Emperor, whose courage and ability made a tremendous impression upon me, I little thought that our next meeting would be in London, where I should find him a sorrowing exile, deserted by those whom he had trusted, yet still a man whose essential greatness was revealed in his least word or gesture. But so it was to be.

Nevertheless, it is worth recording that even amid the rejoicings of coronation day I had strange

forebodings. Although my education and upbringing have been almost entirely along Western lines, I am still in blood and mind a woman of the East, and as I watched the uniformed diplomats of the various European countries bowing and saluting, each man, so it seemed, competing with his neighbour in an effort to be impeccably correct in every gesture towards the crowned head in whose honour they were gathered, I was aware of a veiled cynicism behind the ceremonial, and of an utter lack of sincerity in the whole proceedings.

It is this cynicism which is poisoning the whole world to-day. Among the common people everywhere there is much good will, and even among official circles there is less active ill-will than might be supposed. But there is something far more insidious, an utter unwillingness to give the least credit for good intentions to any Government, no matter how generous a gesture is made. "I am a man of honour," says the diplomat, "and I would not willingly lie. But as I am the only man of honour in this assembly I must cheat like the rest of them if my country's interests are to be safe in my hands." And so cynical distrust becomes the accepted standard of wisdom. I have listened to so many conversations in which amazing ingenuity was exercised in attributing ill motives to those powers not represented in the informal discussion. Young men of polished intellect showed an almost fantastic cleverness in imputing ill-intentions to their diplomatic neighbours, interpreting the most casual actions as evidence of cunning policy, giving to the most normal friendly utterance the most sinister twist of meaning. Diplomacy to-day is a mad house, the cleverest diplomats are the maddest. The American diplomats struck me as being the most honest of the bunch, and they were looked down on by the old school as lacking in "finesse." I once

heard an American observer described as "impossible." He had committed the abominable offence of meaning what he said.

This atmosphere of intrigue, to which I was acutely sensitive, poisoned the happiness of my stay in Ethiopia. I felt that everyone who met me was wondering what was my game. I had no game at all, but so infectious was the miasma of suspicion that I found myself feeling rather out of things and almost wishing that I had some intrigue to forward.

An American journalist, whose name and whose paper I have unfortunately forgotten, was with us for one stage of the journey by rail. He had some pungent things to say concerning European diplomacy. Of one young exquisite, who raised and lowered his eyebrows at every other word, and who abounded in subtle undertones and deprecations, he said: "If that guy were wrecked on a desert island he'd train his front teeth to cheat his back ones."

In view of recent events in Ethiopia, and the attitude of a Europe which permitted them, I am inclined to think that there are too many diplomats of whom that remark would be true.

So many books have been written about Ethiopia in the past year that there seems no need for one single word more. Yet those books which I have read, for all their excellent qualities, have not succeeded in re-creating for me the land through which I passed. Usually I felt that an active and restless intelligence had been at work picking up every morsel of fact available in the shortest possible time. I know the feeling, for that was how I started; but my native indolence (which I have cursed so often) saved me from continuing long on those lines. After a while I ceased to think and question, but threw my note-books aside and left my mind free to absorb whatever

it might choose from the stream of contrasting incidents which flowed past my eyes.

Now as I close my eyes here within the four drab walls of the writing room in a London club, that stream of impressions flows once more, filtered gently by memory, but still bright with colour, and accompanied by a faint but disturbing symphony of strange smells and sounds.

Jibuti. Dust and glare. Flat earth and flat roofs and flat sea, earth and roofs brown yellow, the sea electric blue. The whole place a sort of flameless inferno, slowly crumbling with heat which comes pitilessly from both above and below. A queer sense of sloth and failure hung over the place and there was nowhere anything either cool or lovely on which to rest a shrivelled eye and mind. Worst of all were the attempts at gaiety, the restaurants whose gay paint promised much, but which revealed only a sticky and grimy discomfort at closer view.

The Rhinoceros express pants and hoots in the dusty station. As I pass the engine its heat leaps out at me—a last touch of the intolerable. There is noise and confusion everywhere, last minute waving of papers, protests from coolies who demand backsheesh, oaths in a dozen tongues directed against the heat, the French authorities, and Fate which sends men to such places as Jibuti. Only one figure had any calm or dignity in all that scene, the engine-driver. All ready to go, he stood there in the boiling heat of his cabin, his face set in a happy trance of indifference, his forehead dripping and shining like the metal of his snorting monster.

A man of decision, that engine driver. We are no sooner in our seats than he starts like lightning. There is a long climb ahead and he means to get every ounce of momentum that he can. Wheels jolt and clatter over an uneven track and at every set of

points it seems that our train is to be jerked in half; but we move, and keep on moving, and our speed increases all the time.

No doubt it is not in truth a high speed, but so rough is the track that thirty miles an hour seems like a hundred. Rocking and bumping on our comfortless seats, we converse in brief phrases, each statement shaken from us by some sudden violence of the train.

"Do not worry, mam'seel," says a Greek trader in the most execrable French I have ever heard. "He will go slower when we start to climb. It will be better then."

The nod with which I answer is converted into a sort of trembling seizure by the leaping of the carriage floor. But already the rhythm seems slower, and I feel that we have begun to climb. Then from the window I see Jibuti, and my bruises are forgotten in my amazement. There is the town behind us, a pure white shadow afloat on dazzling yet mysterious blue. Seen thus for the first time it would appear like a heavenly city. Even now, though I know better, I feel that there must be beauty in so fine a place as the distant port appears; for there is something akin to holiness in the purity of that white and blue.

The wheels are grinding now. It is as though the train were pounding and crumbling the harsh soil over which we pass. All round us the undulating earth is a dull red littered with huge black stones. The heat is still stifling and our motion produces not the faintest cooling breeze. Thorn shrubs are scattered over the country and black, stunted trees.

The undulations grow steeper. Through some trick of the hot air the train seems to be stationary, while the mountains close in around it. Then a rush of cool air banishes the illusion. We are in deep valley among the ranges.

"Kataba," says the Greek.

That, I know, is the frontier.

"Will there be any trouble with passports?" I ask.

He shrugs his shoulders.

"Who knows?"

He looks at me keenly.

"You make business at Addis Ababa?"

"I go at the invitation of the Emperor."

"Ah, yes. . . ." The Greek looks doubtful. "That is what they all say nowadays. Still, let us hope that they believe you. Why look for trouble, eh, mamseel?"

He grins politely. "Look," he says, "the flag of the Emperor. We are nearly there."

The banner to which he directs my eyes waves over a sort of stone shack which stands beside the line. Green, yellow and red, its stripes glitter bravely; and in the middle of the yellow is painted the Imperial symbol, the "Lion of Judah."

From Kataba we proceeded to Aisha, where there was a good hotel specially built for travellers by rail, and owned, (as are all the hotels in Ethiopia), by a voluble Greek. No meals were served on the train, but a halt of rather more than an hour was permitted, so that we all lunched in comfort, after which we pushed on to Diredawa, where the train halted for the night. We journeyed over wide and somewhat barren plains surrounded by high mountains, through the outlying spurs of which sometimes the track tunnelled. Bridge after bridge we crossed, all very insecure in appearance; but the watercourses beneath them were dry, for it was the Ethiopian summer.

After leaving Diredawa we reached Afdem at lunch time, and by sunset arrived at Awash, where we spent the second night, only to be roused from an uneasy sleep at five-thirty and to be told that the driver of the train had decided to leave at six o'clock

rather than seven, since his fuel was proving to be of poor quality, and he needed extra time to complete the day's mileage. When I reached the train I heard the various officials of the line complaining loudly that thieves had tampered with the fuel, but the Greek merchant in our party was sceptical, and said that the worst thieves in Ethiopia were always the watchmen themselves.

After Awash the country became more fertile. We climbed continuously, but the slope was exceedingly gradual, and save that the labouring of the engine denoted continuous effort it would have seemed that we were still traversing plains. The distant hills still ringed us round, but did not come any nearer. Cattle gazed at us curiously from among the desert grasses, and deer stampeded at our approach. The houses were partly constructed out of stone which served as a foundation for the usual mud walls. In shape they were curiously rounded, much like the igloo of the Esquimaux, but now and again a group of them would have pyramidal roofs. Round about the huts a meditative ostrich or two turned inexpressive backs towards us and continued to scratch the soil. Whenever the train stopped, which was fairly often, natives came up with ostrich eggs for sale. Their womenfolk came with them, children tied Bedouin fashion upon their backs. Sometimes a man more prosperous than his fellows would offer furs or skins for sale. When they could find no purchasers they still remained cheerful and wrapping the furs round their heads broke into eccentric dances for which some of the passengers threw them small coin. I was struck by the carefree appearance of men and women, while the children, especially were attractive with their pale brown skins and large brown eyes.

Now for an hour we climbed through a volcanic region, and our Greek companion showed himself a

man of learning by talking with unaffected expertise of the various geologic formations. The huge black rocks, he said, were lava on which time and weather had worked, and a lake which we passed he described as several extinct craters which the gradual erosion of water had linked into one. This lake (by name Matahara) marked the end of the barren lands, and now the scenery became truly enchanting. As we wound up into the mountains we could see the villages dotting the plains beneath us, every house with its little garden of green vegetables, a perfect picture of calm fertility. Tall trees stood sentinel on the lower slopes of the hills reminding me of the cedars of Lebanon I loved so well.

"Mojo," said the Greek, as we began to slow down among a string of sheds and dwellings. "This is where the caravans come to the railway," he continued. "It is an important junction. You will see a detachment of the Ethiopian army here, you may be sure."

I leaned out of the window and scrutinised with interest the motley throng along the line. The soldiers did not wear any distinctive uniform, the possession of a rifle and a belt of cartridges being the chief mark of military status. If they saw you were looking at them they put on a swaggering gait and a scowl of incredible ferocity, but they none of them could keep it up for long, and would break suddenly into most delightful smiles. They have the hearts of children, I thought, and their faults, which are doubtless many, are the faults of the spoilt child.

Suddenly down the train there came a babel of voices. Someone, it seemed, was pouring out wild rhetoric of accusation while defendant voices heckled at every pause.

"That is a trial in progress," said the Greek. He thrust his head out of the window beside me and listened. "Theft," he said. "It's always theft. A

father is accusing his son of stealing his sister's marriage portion, and they have come down to the railway because they heard that their local chief was joining the train. He's very annoyed by the whole affair because he was going to Addis Ababa for a spree and doesn't want to be bothered."

"Will he send them about their business?" I asked.

"Oh no," said the Greek, "he is bound by custom to give a decision when called upon. And he's got to hear both sides, too. They have a highly developed sense of law hereabouts—in their own fashion—and a chief would soon be very unpopular if he neglected his duty as judge."

The shouting died down at last, and someone passing told the Greek that the marriage portion story had proved to be a lie invented by the father to blacken his son, who had stolen some of his father's goods rather than let him waste them by purchasing an attractive but otherwise worthless mistress. I learned from another passenger who had been nearer the scene of the trial, that the chief had delivered a judgement which was much applauded. He had ordered the son to be imprisoned and beaten—thus upholding the parental authority; and he had then censured the father for squandering his substance, which he held in trust for his family, and had ordered that the son should receive a fair share of the goods in dispute. I had seen the son removed by soldiers, two cheerful giants, barefooted and bareheaded in spite of the rocky soil and the burning sun, but he too had looked so cheerful that I was surprised to know that he was to be beaten. The Greek explained that since it was a family affair and no breach of discipline against the chief's authority had been committed, he would probably bribe his guards to go very lightly with the beating—since owing to the chief's decision he had funds to spare.

I am not at all sure that my various informants

were accurate in their accounts of the affair, but if they were (I reflected at the time) it seemed a very efficient and sensible legal procedure. In fact, I must point out that whenever I examined closely the mode of life of the Ethiopians I found that in practice it all worked out very much more fairly than biased Europeans, who continually talked of tyranny and so forth, would admit.

We now entered the belt of eucalyptus trees which the Emperor Menelek planted to solve the problem of deforestation caused by the cutting down of trees for fuel. This was so grave a matter at one time that there was talk of abandoning the capital, but now the imported trees flourish exceedingly not only providing excellent logs, but acting, it is said, as a check upon mosquitoes and malaria. After the tall eucalyptus trees we came to a river and as soon as our knowledgeable companion saw it he said that we were almost at our journey's end. As he spoke the train slowed down at Akaki, the last stop before the terminus. It was clear that all roads led to Addis Ababa, for here we were joined by a very mixed batch of travellers. What interested me most was a party of women who came down to the line to send off their men folk. They were very attractive in appearance, and there was not a little coquetry in the way in which they manoeuvred their curious umbrellas, some of which were of straw and others of stretched skin.

We started once more, and almost immediately Addis Ababa appeared through a cleft in the hills. It was some time before we reached the city, however, for the railway wound in and out among the mountains. We had many fine views of the capital, and when I saw the white walls nestling amid the surrounding green I could well understand why the Empress Taitu, wife of Menelek II named the capital Addis Ababa—the New Flower.

CHAPTER XII

PAGES FROM MY ETHIOPIAN JOURNAL

November 8. The delegates are leaving Addis Ababa to-morrow—or the next day—time is not much regarded here in spite of the Emperor's insistence upon its value. To-day Ras Hailu, governor of Gojam, gave a banquet at the Robinson Casino at which their Majesties were guests of honour. The Crown Prince Asfou Wossen was there, with other members of the Royal family. Diplomatic rumour-mongers whisper that he is not on good terms with his father. If so, he conceals it excellently. He is very affable to the Duke of Gloucester, principal foreign guest, but the language difficulty hampers their talk. Menu is European; cooking excellent, wines not so good as the Emperor's. But the star turn of the banquet is the Duke's band. Everybody dances most informally to music supplied by British seamen. Ethiopian gentleman asks me the name of prominent instrument. "Trombone," say I. "I would like to play it," he says. "Is it difficult?" I tell him it is very difficult —needing years of study. He looks depressed, but I feel that I have done good in saving Ethiopia from civilisation in one of its least attractive forms.

Ras Hailu, a very dignified yet amiable host, appears delighted by the music—but now a halt is called as we are to see a native dance. There are thirty women the Governor has brought from his province. Six in the inner circle are dressed in the Ethiopian colours. The others are in white—long, high-waisted robes, with white turbans, which set off the delicately-carved

features. The outer ring clap hands and intone a chant, the inner ring whistle, a most peculiar sound devoid of melody or recognisable pitch. The only instruments I can see are metal drums which sound with a sort of tingling thud. The dance does not cover much ground—the body is held erect and each limb is moved in turn—quite complicated patterns resulting. I am told that it is a dance of very ancient origin. From my knowledge of Eastern dancing I conclude that it is Semitic rather than Arab in source. It also seems to me that some modern mind has been "pepping up" the ancient ritual—which is a pity. I am impressed by the fact that the dance is based merely on the surrender of the mind to a rhythm, and that there is no recognisable element of sexual allure. This points to a religious origin at the best period of early Judaism, I fancy, and is the main distinction between these dances and those I have seen among the desert Arabs. Great applause for the dancers, who are charming, though their art is somewhat too sedate for European men about town. I see Latin delegates yawning discreetly. Nevertheless, there has been the right note about this party. My brother and I agree we have had a very good time.

November 20. I have had a talk with an Ethiopian merchant, an unnofficial adviser to the Emperor, a charming and honourable gentleman who knows Europe and has uncanny command of languages. He tells me of very ambitious plans for schools. I counter by suggesting all this is window-dressing in the capital—that the country at large will remain untouched. His denials are explicit. The Emperor, he says, is an inspired educationist. His plans are held up merely by the difficulty of money. It is the Emperor's policy to lower taxes, not to raise them. The talk turns to the military position. There are Belgian officers for the infantry, Frenchmen in charge

of the budding air force, and Italians have promised instruction in the use of tanks.

I ask concerning slavery. The whole structure of the State is based upon it, says my informant, nevertheless His Majesty is sworn to stamp it out. "Give us twenty years," he says. "In a matter so far-reaching we might well take a hundred." Then he gives me chapter and verse for worse conditions than any in Ethiopia which are to be found in other African territories under European rule. "I am in favour of ending slavery," he says, "because in the long run it doesn't pay. Beat them as much as you like, slaves won't ever really work. But all this pious agitation sickens me. It is either ignorant or hypocritical. I wish I could talk to the League of Nations. Then I'd tell them about their own door-steps, I promise you."

When we parted I had to admit how deeply the administrative grasp of this man had impressed me.

November 22. At an informal party to-day at which Ethiopian and European visitors mingled, I saw a strange sight. One of the Ethiopians gave a sharp cough and immediately a servant rushed in bearing a bowl in one hand and a white cloth in the other. The bowl he handed to his master and then spread the cloth so that none might observe what followed. I gathered that the man was spitting, and wondered at this delicacy of manners. On discussion with a French delegate (who has stayed on to put through some business of his own, I fancy) I learned that it is a superstition. Apparently they think that the spirit of a man passes from him when he spits, and that it is an ill thing to expose your soul thus to the common gaze. Just what the logic of it all is no one is quite sure, least of all those who practise the shielding of the spittle. If a man wishes to be released from an oath he spits three times on the ground in

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the presence of observers, and then he is free. This action is intended, perhaps, to show that he is so righteous in his determination to abandon his sworn word that he fears no devil; or it may be some form of forfeit. No one could enlighten me—though there is presumably some invocation of the Trinity in the number three. The explanation of the strange conduct on the part of the guest was that chiefs are in town for the festivities who are less sophisticated than those who normally surround the Emperor. No member of the court group would have acted thus in the house of a European.

December 1. To-day is a great day for my brother and me. We have received a letter informing us that his Majesty has appointed a time for an interview. I have replied that we are counting the minutes which must pass before we are to have that honour.

December 2. Accompanied by my brother I proceeded in a motor car to the Imperial Palace, or Gibbi. It was a glorious summer morning (for December is summer here). There was not one cloud in the blue sky, so that we had excellent conditions for taking a photograph of the palace on our arrival. As we neared the palace, before ascending the steps we were received by the guard, who guided us to the large and beautiful chamber, the Throne room, where his Majesty meets his guests. It is the most beautiful salon in the Palace, furnished with most costly furniture. Facing the entrance is the red velvet throne, decorated with golden embroidery. The red velvet cushions have golden embroidery too. It is all very rich and substantial. No pinchbeck finery here. Over the throne is a golden crown. The chair is also of gold. That was where his Majesty was seated for the interview. When I reached the door four guards were there and two personal attendants were standing near by dressed in tight white trousers and black

coats. His Majesty was sitting bare headed, wearing a white suit and a black cloak; and just in front of him was a small table covered with a velvet cover.

When I was ushered into the room I curtsied and then kissed His Majesty's hand. On one of his fingers he wore a brilliant diamond ring, the stone a really splendid solitaire. The custom of the Ethiopians when they meet his Majesty is to kneel several times before they come near to him, and then to kiss his hands. When they leave they do not turn their backs, but they walk backwards, bowing and facing him till they reach the door.

His Majesty is light of skin, and his gaze is of an encouraging frankness. He has the manner of a scholar and a gentleman. He began the conversation by asking me: "Why have you come to Abyssinia?"

I told him that I, a woman of the East, was nevertheless a Christian, and that in my travels I was determined to visit the one independent Christian Empire of the orient. He asked me how I was free to travel, and I answered that I wrote articles for the Press and lectured.

"You write poems too, do you not?" said his Majesty graciously. "Do not be ashamed to say you are a poet. It is a worthy calling. I, too, write, but not poetry. The literature of my country is not poetical."

I expressed surprise that so wild and beautiful a land had not produced poetry.

"Oh, we have songs," he said. "But no one has thought them worth recording, and we have had to struggle too hard against our enemies to find time for the gracious arts. Perhaps we shall produce poems if our present years of peace continue. It is my dearest wish that knowledge shall spread and that the arts shall be fostered. Already I have one Ethiopian artist who produces lovely and characteristic work. The French, now—they write fine poetry. And their

ambassador tells me that one of their greatest poets fled to Abyssinia years ago." (His Majesty was referring to Arthur Rimbaud, with whose magical verses and strange life story all lovers of French literature will be familiar.)

The Emperor next questioned me concerning my travels. "Which of the Eastern lands where you have journeyed was most like Ethiopia?" he asked me. I thought for a moment, and then said that while every country seemed different from every other, I thought that Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, was very like Addis Ababa. There were green mountains all round and a beautiful river. There were political similarities, too, I said.

The Emperor showed himself well acquainted with the historical matters to which I referred.

"Poor King Amanullah," he said. "There was a monarch who sacrificed himself for the progress of his country."

(When I read these words in my journal and think of how I scribbled them down that evening without a thought of their dramatic significance, I cannot help recalling the Emperor's voice as he spoke. It was a measured voice, full of knowledge. He knew even in those days, when delegates of all the nations of Europe were met to celebrate his coronation, how little their friendship was worth, and with what envious eyes they gazed upon his possessions. He knew that he was surrounded by treachery, and that he was faced by an agonising dilemma. The only hope of preserving the independence of his country lay in modernisation, and modernisation must of necessity alienate large numbers of his people. That was the rock on which the hope of King Amanullah had foundered, and when he spoke to me of that sad story the Emperor Haile Selassie had more than a faint perception that this was the snare life had laid for him.)

"How long are you staying with us?" asked His Majesty.

"One month," I replied.

His face fell. "Do you think you will be able to study our country in so short a time?" he questioned. "I am only too well aware that that is impossible, Your Highness," I answered, "but I am forced to consider ways and means."

He smiled. "If that is the only difficulty it is soon overcome," he said. "Stay with us three—no, rather make it four, months. See everything you can, ask every question that your mind may form. And as for expense—tell your hotel to send the accounts to my Treasurer. It will be my pleasure to have you and your brother stay as my guests."

Our conversation had hitherto been in French, which the Emperor speaks perfectly, having learned the groundwork of the language from a French missionary at Harar when he was still a boy, with no thought of ascending to the throne. Now, however, he addressed me a few words in Arabic of which he has some mastery. For a while he questioned me closely as to all I had seen, and I had the impression of a cautious, well-ordered mind storing away every scrap of information it received for future reference. Then at last Haile Selassie rose to signify that the audience was at an end.

"Have you seen the Palace?" he asked. We answered that this was our first visit.

"You must see it this morning," he said and clapped his hands.

Immediately one of his personal servants approached to receive instructions and to conduct us away. At this last moment I produced my album: Would His Majesty be good enough to sign among the other famous names? He graciously consented. And her Majesty? As a woman I was anxious especially to talk with her.

The Emperor promised that if I would apply in writing for an audience he would see that I was warmly recommended to Her Majesty. "Write to my Foreign Minister," he said. "He will refer the matter to 'La Dame de la Cour,' and she will arrange the time of the interview."

I was a little puzzled as to who this "Lady of the Court" might be, but on making enquiries I found that she was one Frau Hartel, wife of a German engineer, who had become attached to Her Majesty the Empress and was her trusted adviser. It was by this time rather late, and I had a luncheon engagement, so we postponed our inspection of the palace.

December 4. To-day we have seen the palace, ushered round by a most respectful steward whose command of any other language than Ethiopian is so scanty that he has brought the art of impressive and highly descriptive gesture to an unprecedented level. It has been a very instructive visit. The Gibbi, or Palace, is built on a high hill overlooking the whole of Addis Ababa; from it, when one looks below, can be seen the scattered houses of the city dotted here and there, with the river and the green eucalyptus trees adding charm to the picture. The surrounding countryside can be viewed in all its beauty from the terrace of the palace, a commanding though unostentatious building, surrounded with high walls. There are three halls or reception rooms in daily use, the finest of which is the throne room. The other halls are full of valuable gifts that have been sent by the Kings and Emperors of different countries. I was specially struck by the beauty of the precious glassware and Venetian vases which were a present from Franz Joseph to the Emperor Menelek, but not all the presents were of this degree of beauty, and some are suspiciously like "junk."

The rooms are clean, airy and well appointed,

and my only criticism is that they mix rather too freely the period styles of Europe with Oriental fashions of very conflicting taste.

Close to the palace there are other dwellings quite European in character, for certain members of the Royal family; and there is also a church, where His Majesty goes to pray every Sunday. It is called the "Church of the Trinity"—thus recalling the Emperor's name, for Haile Selassie means the "Power of the Trinity." Near the church is the tomb of Menelek, the late Emperor, a domed mausoleum.

The "Church of the Trinity" is somewhat, I fancy, a private place of worship for the Emperor. On formal occasions His Majesty attends Service at St. George's Cathedral.

Before leaving the vast gardens we saw the cages where the tamed lions are kept. They are the favourite animals of His Majesty, because they represent the Lion of Judah. In these gardens His Majesty and the Royal family take their walk on most days of the week, the tamer lions being permitted to walk with them. This is very impressive to the populace, who consider lions to be the hall-mark of Kingship.

December 7. There is no doubt that word has come to our hotel that we are the Emperor's personal guests, and are to be treated accordingly. Service, which was none too good, has improved out of all recognition and a respectful attitude characterises the entire staff. We reflect that the Emperor is clearly a great power in the land, since even the rumour that we enjoy his favour has wrought such a change. We ourselves had not mentioned the Emperor's invitation, being not quite sure if we could take it literally. We have now decided that it was true kingly hospitality and will accept it gratefully as such.

December 8. Went into the highways and byways of the town to-day. Walking, which was at first

fatiguing on account of the rarefied air, is now much easier. My brother has a dispute with an extortionate shopkeeper.

"We are the Emperor's guests," he says in Amharic. "You must not rob us thus!" Result: 75 per cent. reduction of price—from twenty dollars to five for a picturization in native style of the Apostles. Regretfully decide not to purchase. We are travelling light and dare not burden ourselves with too many curios. Enquire postage rates for parcels at the Central Post Office. Not very clear information, but rates appear to be prohibitive. Must ask one of the Emperor's ministers. In a side street just as it is getting dusk we see the first sign of disorder we have observed since our arrival in the capital—two men fighting desperately with free interchange of oaths. The elder of the two is getting the worst of it, but no police are at hand. Finally the loser begins to shout: "Ba Haile Selassie mout!" When he has repeated this cry several times the other stops hitting him. On my enquiring later concerning this I am told that the loser shouted, "Touch me again and Haile Selassie will die!" To continue a fight after this formula has been uttered is to commit an offence against the person of the Emperor. I discussed this strange custom with my brother, who points out that in European countries something of the same idea is held. "To brawl in England," he says, "is a breach of the King's Peace." The Ethiopian formula is more picturesque and more vivid, being admirably adapted to the less sophisticated mind.

December 8. Having scraped up an acquaintance with one of the hotel porters, an intelligent sort of fellow, I find him to-day suffering from stomach-ache. I suggest a doctor. He stubbornly insists that only a priest can help him. So he goes to the priest and comes back an hour later much better. On my

enquiring what the treatment was, I am told that it was the very best possible and cost half a dollar, a very big sum indeed, so I think that my friend is bragging. Details of treatment follow. Certain holy words were written in sacred ink upon a tin platter. Then a sacred liquor was used to wash them off, and the washings were drunk. In this way the holy precepts entered the body and no evil could withstand them. I am offered the same treatment should I chance to fall ill.

December 10. We have to-day dined with an Ethiopian family, a rather unnerving experience. Although the food served at banquets when European guests are invited is European, at a private and informal repast the guest is expected to eat the national food in the national way—namely, with the fingers of the right hand. I have learned this to-day at the cost of considerable personal discomfort, the Minister of Education—with the best of intentions, no doubt—having asked me to lunch at his house.

My brother was also invited, and when the meal was announced we sat on the floor on mattresses of red velvet under which were Persian carpets. I was very hungry, waiting for the food to come. At last one of the servants came in carrying an extra large tray on which was placed a big dish covered with a straw lid. Then the hostess (the minister's wife) sent for the cook and gave him to eat in her presence a portion of his own cooking. That aroused my curiosity, and I naturally asked my host why the cook was being thus fed. The explanation was that if the food was poisoned—as was sometimes the case when one had an enemy—the effect would show itself on the cook. So although I was keenly hungry, a good ten minutes was allowed to pass before the food was eaten by the family. Then, the cook being still unaffected, we fell to. I further learned that this

practice obtains throughout the land, and is found in the homes of ordinary folk as well as in those of the rich. It is observed in the Emperor's palace too. I couldn't help thinking that it was a good idea. It wasn't at all likely, I reflected, that the cook would willingly lend himself to a deadly experiment, but I was a little anxious, since were he to fall dead I should get no dinner. So for ten minutes the atmosphere of suspense was terrible. I was glad when the demonstration proved to be entirely satisfactory to my host and hostess, whereupon we at last commenced to eat.

The meal consisted of many loaves of bread (called "Injera") made of a kind of grain (called "Taff") and which looked not unlike the Arab loaves which are round and flat and large. We were next served with beans and a red sauce, which I very soon discovered was not tomato sauce, but one made of crushed chillies! Before each one of us there were placed two bottles of home-made wine: one was called "Tage," and it was made with barley; the name of the other was "Talla." This wine, I was told, is a great delicacy, and is distilled from fermented honey.

We of course ate with our fingers, and the very first mouthful I took was so hot that I not only gave up the idea of eating more but earnestly begged my host to give me a drink of curdled milk in the hope that thereby I might ease the burning irritation of mouth and throat that actually brought tears to my eyes. But, instead of giving me the soothing drink, the hostess arose, dipped a hand in the food, and put a morsel in my mouth. I prayed the host to prevent her giving me more, but his answer was: "Miss Khoury, the custom is that you must eat three separate morsels offered to you personally by the hostess. This is our way of showing respect to our guests, and non-acceptance amounts to an insult to us all." While truly grateful for the spirit which had

prompted the invitation I was nevertheless glad to get back to the hotel alive.

December 12. To-day there arrived this letter. It was brought by a stalwart footman in palace livery:

Mademoiselle Khoury.

"Mademoiselle,

"J'ai l'honneure de vous informer que Sa Majesté l'Imperatrice a daignée de fixer l'audience demandée pour Mercredi 5h l'aprés midi.

"Par ordre de Sa Majesté C'Imperatrice.

"Dame de la cour

"(Sgd.) Anne Marie Hartel."

The phraseology and the use of the French language built up in my mind a picture of Schoenbrun and Versailles which seemed out of touch with Ethiopia. Yet the more I reflected on the simple formula the more I realised that the whole atmosphere was well conceived. Royalty is a difficult burden to carry successfully in these days and one can only say of it that where it continues to exist it is essential that correctitude shall be observed, since once this is departed from the whole structure collapses.

December 14. As soon as I reached the salon where Her Majesty awaited me, I was received by Frau Hartel, (Dame de la Cour), who introduced me to Her Majesty. I approached with deference, bowing my head, and kissed her hand as is the oriental custom when meeting Kings or Queens.

Her Majesty, like the Emperor, was simple and direct in conversation. She asked me about my home in Egypt and how I first came to set out on my travels. Having answered these questions, I asked, through Frau Hartel, if Her Majesty would allow me to deliver some Arabic verses, printed in golden letters and prepared for her, to be translated into the Amharic

language. Her Majesty very kindly accepted my offer of poetic tribute, and while I recited she continued to nod approval. After my recitation I translated the verses into French, and Frau Hartel then put them into Amharic. Her Majesty said: "Bousu Malafiano," which means "very good." I presented Her Majesty with about twenty copies of that poem, to be distributed among the ladies of the royal family as a humble Christmas card.

Her Majesty was very pleased when she learned that the purpose of my travels was to further the educational movement among women. She herself, she told me, was patron of a girls' school recently opened in Addis Ababa. From the quiet enthusiasm of her observations I felt that far from exercising the retrograde influence which some writers have ascribed to her, she is in every way an able helpmate to the Emperor.

She was sitting on a throne dressed in a white brilliant silk dress and white cloak, with her head bare and a white band over her forehead. Only in her dignity did she resemble European royalty, but from what she told me I gathered that she spends her time in very much the same way. She pays regular visits to the hospitals and is always busy caring for the interests of women throughout the country. Lately she has been busily engaged in organising Red Cross activities among women, so as to check preventable disease. She is good-hearted and pious; following the Christian religion in its Ethiopian form, and respecting all its precepts. She is a splendid mother, and thinks of her country as of her family.

When ladies, such as wives of ministers or of the nobility are received by Her Majesty, it is the custom that they should hide their faces with a white shield, and leave only the eyes uncovered. While approaching Her Majesty, they must perform numerous kneelings,

and then kiss her hand. When they leave they never turn their backs to Her Majesty, but walk backward, facing her till they are out of sight.

I did my best to strike a correct medium between over-elaborate ceremonial and too free informality. Seemingly the Empress was well pleased, for she dismissed me with a reverent blessing upon my work telling me to seek her out if there were anything I needed.

Frau Hartel's attitude was friendly, but watchful. Hers was a strange position, I reflected, but I was sure that she discharged her duties admirably, and that her devotion to her mistress was very real.

December 24. Christmas is approaching and all manner of religious ceremonies are to be performed. Last night we went to the Cathedral for the midnight service. When my brother and I were noticed standing at the back of the church we were asked to come nearer to the Altar, one of the priests conducting us to privileged seats. It was very gloomy and impressive. The priests were carrying several kinds of incense burners. Some were of silver, and were so made that when shaken they produced a metallic sound. After a long prayer some of the priests danced before the Lord while others seated on the floor around them continued an ominous beating of their drums. The general congregation were also seated on the floor. The service lasted until three in the morning, for the dancing seemed endless. At the finish the people kissed one another as a sign of rejoicing because of the birth of Christ. Then the Bishop walked round the cathedral holding an open umbrella which was made of red silk. We received from him a very friendly and informal blessing as he passed. I was much impressed by the genuineness of this religion which I had heard much criticised. It was simple and reverent, and the voices were of sonorous dignity.

CHAPTER XIII

ETHIOPIA—LAST THOUGHTS

DURING my three months' stay in Addis Ababa several opportunities came my way—through the kind instrumentality of Sahli Sidalon, Minister of Education—to visit the schools for both boys and girls. I inspected the St. George's School and the Menelek College, and found the students intelligent and keen on their studies. They are taught Amharic as the first language, then French, Arabic and English. French was given second place in order to equip them—on leaving school—for service in Government departments or on the Franco-Ethiopian Railway. Amharic and Geez, the religious language, have both affinities with Arabic. In St. George's School there was a Theological Department where training for the priesthood was given, and here the Geez language, obsolete in normal daily life, was taught with great thoroughness by special wish of the Emperor, who, while standing always for progress wished to preserve the study of the ancient literatures. Some Theology Students were sent to Egypt for special studies, with a view to their becoming priests of the Coptic Church.

While the schools in Addis Ababa were only to be considered as a nucleus from which a more widespread system of instruction might grow, they undoubtedly reflected the greatest credit on the regime of the Emperor. Apart from his encouragement of ordinary elementary schooling, His Majesty sent every year several scholarship students to the Universities of Europe and America for higher studies in the arts and in science. In time he hoped that this would develop a corps of expert advisers to ensure progress continuing.

Haile Selassie had declared in favour of complete religious toleration throughout his Kingdom, had strictly prohibited gambling, and had forbidden trading in slaves under penalty of death. Though the abominable practice continued quietly here and there, it was swiftly and surely passing from the land. But though his progressive edicts were many, it was in his support of education as the main factor in all reform that the Emperor showed his truest wisdom.

The girls' schools were few as compared with those for boys, some of which were controlled by missions sent by foreign nations, such as America and Britain, and also by the Catholic mission. So far as the entire country was concerned, it must be admitted that education was very limited, but Her Majesty was encouraging the education of both sexes, and schools had been built in Harar, Godjam, Gouri, and Addis Alem, in addition to those in the capital.

If only the Ethiopian Church had been less static it might have been used to good effect throughout the country as an educative influence. There are innumerable churches and monasteries, a great many being in the capital itself, while some of the most famous are to be found in Aksum, the sacred city. What is acknowledged to be the best church is St. George's Cathedral, in Addis Ababa, where the coronation of the Emperor took place. The churches and monasteries are full of miserable pictures painted on the walls, reminding the people of the sufferings of the Christian martyrs, but little was done to relieve the sufferings or elevate the minds of the masses. In its best forms there is much to be said for the primitive vigour of the Coptic doctrine, but I felt that the Church of Ethiopia needed thorough reform.

Many hard things have been said concerning the Somalis by Europeans who have come into close con-

HAILE SELASSIE MEETS THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

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tact with them. But personally I do not feel disposed to echo these adverse judgments. They are based on standards which are quite inapplicable to the case. I remember asking a Greek trader, who was not only an excellent man of business but somewhat of a philosopher as well, what he really thought of Abyssinia.

"Madam," he replied, "don't be too ready to listen to these European grumblers. Abyssinia is a very fine country—for the Abyssinians. And I ask you as one fair-minded person to another—what else has it any need to be?"

I treasured that saying, applying it not only to Ethiopia but to many other places I visited. The European traveller is cut off from a true understanding of what he sees by the feeling of superiority, by an urge to change. When I met Somalis I did not think of them as treacherous, thieving, cruel. I saw them as what they were, irresponsible children of nature. They seemed to me quite lacking in malice, for all their enormities; and I noticed, too, that they were always laughing. Now, laughter is a very precious thing, and I refuse to believe that a race who are always laughing can be such criminals as some would have us believe. What I do admit, and this quite readily, is that if there is any race under the sun designed by God to reduce the Englishman to a hopeless hysteria of nervous rage it is the Somalis.

One story which was told me will be sufficient to illustrate the sort of thing which the Somalis will do. They are, above all, persistent litigants, and even more than the other Ethiopian peoples they dote upon a lawsuit. In the days when their own Sheiks settled their disputes I imagine that justice was rough and ready, for their rulers, knowing them well, would swiftly divine where truth lay, and give judgment accordingly. In some districts their chiefs still have complete sway, and I saw several trials—civil actions

they would be called in Europe—dismissed with very summary jurisdiction. . . . But other districts are governed by the writ of the white man, and in these territories justice is dispensed along lines laid down so long ago in "*Littleton on Coke*"—or is it "*Coke on Littleton*"? When the Somalis found that the inexperienced British magistrates were prepared to hold long and very painstaking enquiries into minor cases of theft and fraud they hailed with delight this new source of amusement.

The coming of the magistrate was a sort of gala day, and they took good care to have plenty of cases ready for him. If the supply of bona fide cases seemed likely to run short the Somalis, determined not to be cheated out of their entertainment, would invent them. Two heads of households would agree that one should charge the other with the theft of some piece of property. Each would be allowed to choose the same number of witnesses as the other, and coach them in as plausible a tale as could be devised. Naturally under these conditions it was "even money" which side the magistrate would believe, and the whole village would wager heavily on the result of the trial.

If one of the disputants was famed as the local champion in the art of plausible untruth the odds would be in his favour. Each move and counter move in the trial would be cheered with the same sort of enthusiasm as a Britisher shows at a Cup-final.

Camels are a favourite subject of dispute, and many an unsuspecting magistrate has spent weary hours determining the ownership of seven non-existent camels. Ingenious excuses are always ready to account for the failure to produce the disputed beasts. They are always at a village some miles away, the roads are bad, the beasts are lame . . . a variety of reasons are given. Once, I was told, a young and very enthusiastic magistrate refused to give judgment without

seeing the actual camels in the case. This was awkward. There was nothing for it but to offer to take him to the place where they were tethered. So the Somalis led him mile after mile through the roughest country around their village, hoping that he would tire. But they little understood the temperament of their law-giver. Having once set his hand to the business he was prepared to suffer any hardship to satisfy his sense of duty. Even when the rains broke unexpectedly he still kept on. At last the Somalis, in despair, simply left him and made off as fast as they could. He was left alone in the swamps to meditate on the strange minds of these people to whom he had been sent for the dispensing of justice and who seemed to regard the dread solemnity of the law as a splendid sort of game.

I left Ethiopia full of hope for its future. Now I have lived to see the good Emperor in exile, and even as I write these words comes news of a ghastly massacre, and the two sons of my good friend Dr. Martin are among the slain. Prisoners slaughtered in cold blood. . . . The mind recoils from such horror. Let us have faith that the last word is not yet spoken and that it will be the word of God.

CHAPTER XIV

GIBRALTAR OF THE EAST

ADEN, the "Gibraltar of the East," is situated in a rocky amphitheatre, the town itself being actually built in the crater of an extinct volcano. This mass of cinder-like rock is about five miles long and three broad, and, jutting out to sea, forms one arm of the harbour.

We had left Jibuti by boat to cross the Gulf, and about ten hours later we put into Tawyahi, or Aden Back-bay, which is the sea-port of Aden. Here, while our passports were being examined, we were asked many penetrating questions by the officials. Why had we come to Aden? Did we know people living there? Was it on matters of business? Why had we come at that particular time? We explained, of course, that our visit was simply an educational one, and when we referred our questioners to Sheik Mohamed Hasan, of Aden—evidently a well-known and much respected man—our difficulties disappeared.

I then told the officials that I hoped to visit the nine Sultanates and Yemen, the country of Imam Yahia. They advised me very strongly to abandon this idea; the roads, they said, were very poor indeed, and the journey was a really dangerous one for women, owing to the uncertain nature of the country and the possibility of encountering bandits. However, they suggested instead, that we should visit the Sultanate of Lahij. We approached the Governor of Aden for the necessary official permit, which was readily granted. We were told, however, to postpone our visit to Lahij until the customary feasting should show that the great fast of Ramadan was over, as the Sultan does not receive visitors during that period.

After the disappointment over the other Sultanates and Yemen, we were quite determined not to miss Lahij, so we were forced to spend several weeks in the almost unbearable heat of Aden. Fortunately this heat, although intense, is dry and not unhealthy; but it is very trying to Indians and Arabs, as well as Europeans, who confine as much of their activity as possible to the early morning! During our wait we had plenty of time to explore Aden, and made many excursions in and around the town—generally in an ancient touring car which, by courtesy, was called a "taxi." The drivers of such vehicles knew no fear, and their passengers soon learnt that if their nervous systems were to remain intact, they must achieve a similar stoicism. Some of the roads leading to outlying places passed through tunnels cut in the volcanic rock; here the roads were usually quite narrow, and I gathered that if two cars met between those rough rocky walls, it was a case of the survival of the fittest! The tunnels were, somewhat surprisingly to me, lit by rows of electric lamps.

Apart from the heat, the great problem at Aden is water—or rather the lack of it. Owing to the salty nature of the ground any water found near the surface is quite unsuitable for drinking. There are a number of deep wells bored in the solid rock, but the bulk of the town's supply is either obtained by distillation from sea-water; or is brought in special carts from outlying places. These carts look like enormous barrels on wheels, and are drawn by camels; from them the street-vendors sell water for drinking at a fixed price per carafe. That Aden had its water-supply problems in ancient times too is evident from the amazing and famous tanks built between the mountains. These tanks, some of which are carved from solid rock, are cascaded one above the other, so that as each in turn becomes filled it overflows into the tank beneath it.

Although the mean temperature of the district is 87 degrees Fahrenheit, there is also a hot season when temperatures may rise to 102 degrees in the shade! During this period, which is called "Kawi", the streets are artificially cooled by sprays of the precious water. The schools hold their classes in suitably shady places in the open air, and if you were to wander through the streets at night you would find most people sleeping on string beds just outside their houses, surrounded by unbelievably scrawny goats and other domestic animals.

The population of the town is a heterogeneous one, being composed mostly of Arabs, Somalis, Jews and Indians; it is remarkable to think that there are about one hundred different castes living in the neighbourhood of Aden, all of them loyal to the Administration. The men all speak English, but this is more often than not coloured with Urdu and other languages. "Give me a glass of icy water" —was rendered in my hearing as: "Habbi glass pani ice." Many of the Indian men in Aden are comparatively rich merchants, but most of the Jews appear to be money-changers; everywhere you go you see them—striking figures with their red tarbushes and long beards, and with their sacks full of rupees and dollars. "Sarf! Sarf!" they cry monotonously and rather sadly as they ply their trade. I have never been able to understand how there can be such a good living for so many men in simply changing other people's money!

Unlike the more emancipated Somali women, who wear no veils and have little restriction placed upon them, the Arab women of Aden are veiled, and keep strict purdah; they do not go out at all in daylight. At night, they may visit women friends and relatives under cover of darkness, when the men, from a traditional sense of decency, do not frequent the streets.

The veils worn by the Arab women are of fine black silk, but otherwise expensive perfumes are indulged in more than fine attire; the women actually scent their clothes by suspending them in a cane framework over burning braziers of incense. As a counterpart to the men's habit of chewing kat leaves, the women drink large quantities of infusion of chicory.

Before giving more of my own impressions of Aden, I should perhaps say something about the political, military and internal administration of the town. Since the year 1839 it has been British, and with subsequent additions and including the island of Perim, the area now amounts to about eighty square miles, although much more is under direct British influence. The Royal Air Force now controls the military command, but the Government of India is responsible for the internal administration through the agency of a Chief Commissioner. Aden is immensely important to Britain from the military point of view, and it is very strongly garrisoned and fortified. Its natural rocky enclosure and the commanding position and fine harbour make it almost invulnerable, except from the air. Aden Camp is in the big crater of the extinct volcano, which is sometimes referred to as the Devil's Punch-bowl. Steamer point, across the harbour, is much cooler, and is not so thickly populated as the Camp area.

Commercially the town is a busy one, many millions of pounds of business being transacted in the year. Most of this trade is in the transhipment of merchandise, the port being what is known as an "entrêpot." There is a large coal depot at Tawyahi —the district around Steamer Point, but Aden Camp, about five miles away, is really the commercial part. The Governor's house, the consulates and the better European style hotels are at Tawyahi, and there are some really good shops there, selling the best European merchandise.

Just before the approaching fast of Ramadan we were invited to attend the wedding ceremony of Ibrahim-el-Mass, a relative of our friend the Sheik Mohamed Hasan. We very readily accepted this opportunity of learning something of the picturesque Arab wedding celebrations. Arriving at the house, we were introduced with due ceremony to the guests, among whom were the two sons of His Highness the Sultan of Lahij, and his minister, Syed Allawi-el-Jafri. We then entered a large room at the end of which the bridegroom was seated on an elevated platform, drawing long puffs of smoke from a "hubble-bubble" placed before him. As the guests were presented to him in turn, they would offer presents of money according to their means, while an attendant sprayed perfume on their hands, exclaiming "Ariss, Ariss" (the Arabic word for bridegroom) as he did so. I was a little uncertain what to do when it was my turn to be presented, but the bridegroom accepted my offer with a gracious smile, and placed it under the thick Persian carpet on which he was seated. How different, I reflected, from the customs of the West, where one may offer silver if it is beaten into a rose-bowl or toast-rack!—but where the more useful gift of money is the prerogative of the elderly friend or near relative—and is then disguised as a signature on a cheque!

After we had been presented we joined the other guests, sitting on the floor oriental-fashion, on Persian carpets. Liberal supplies of the green leaves called "Kat" were handed round for those who liked chewing this leaf. "Kat" resembles the dried leaf of the lemon tree, and is chewed like tobacco. It is supposed to be harmful, but that does not seem to affect its consumption; I found the leaves acrid and unpleasant.

Presently, food was brought in, and we sat with the two princes and minister of Lahij, eating our

meal in the eastern way—the right hand being used to help oneself to any fancied tit-bits, and the left hand for holding a bowl of water. At the close of the meal the bridegroom took a seat close to the door, with a brass bowl in his lap; as the guests filed out, presumably mellowed by the food and drink, they again offered presents of money. As we passed from the dining-room we had a choice of three separate apartments, in each of which a band of musicians was playing. The music was of three different kinds—Yamani, Quitti and Egyptian: surely an elegant example of eastern courtesy to guests. I saw nothing, of course, of the women's celebrations which were taking place at the same time at the bride's home in Lahij, but I was told something of the customs there. On the day before the ceremony the bride went with her women friends and relatives to the public bath, which had been specially reserved for the occasion: there, with much friendly banter, laughter and traditional song, she bathed. At night she was adorned with all the splendour and finery possible, and seated on a high platform in the largest apartment in her father's house, while her women friends sat round singing and offering presents of money. Before she retired, the bride's hands and the soles of her feet were anointed with henna. On the day of the wedding, the nearest relatives of the bridegroom came to fetch the bride, when she was escorted in state to her new home by a band of musicians bearing flaming torches, and followed by men carrying incense-burners and perfume bottles, with which they sprinkled the onlookers; a gay and happy procession!

I should like to linger and tell more of these picturesque and beautiful ceremonies, but must continue with the story of my travels. After the wedding the period of the great fast of Ramadan began. Ramadan is the name of the ninth month of the

Mahommedan year, in which time it is believed that Mahommet received his great revelation. As the time is reckoned by the phases of the moon the period of fasting begins eleven days earlier each year; so that in time it occurs throughout the seasons. No kind of food whatsoever must be taken between sunrise and sunset during the thirty days of the fast, and strictly, only necessary nourishment may be taken after sunset; but this concession is interpreted liberally. It seemed to me that Aden was surely the quietest place in the world during Ramadan; for all the shops were closed, and one could not buy food of any sort before six o'clock in the evening. Being the guests of Muslim friends, we naturally volunteered to fast with them; but I must confess that, without even the consolation of spiritual favours, I found this a very trying time.

When at last the period of Ramadan was over, we lost no time in setting out for Lahij, which is but a few miles from Aden. But what a journey! The "road" appeared to be merely what was left after ripping up the half-finished railway line between the two places. I was told that this projected link was abandoned because of objections raised by the Imam Yahia of Yemen; but whether or not that is true, I was physically exhausted by the buffeting on that brief hour's car journey. Several times I was nearly thrown out of the side of the vehicle, and I am sure the trip would be quite dangerous to anyone of delicate constitution. On our arrival at the beautiful palace of the Sultan, we were received by his minister, the same Syed Allawi-el-Jaffri whom we had met at the wedding. After an exchange of pleasantries the minister told us that the Sultan would be glad to receive us. Before entering the palace we had paused to admire the fine building, glistening white in the hard glare of the sun, and surrounded by surprisingly luxurious

gardens and fruit trees; close by we saw a tobacco plantation with stacks of tambac humma awaiting exportation to foreign countries. This leaf is much valued for blending purposes.

The palace itself is a modern building, with a great variety of apartments furnished in both European and oriental styles. It was in one of the latter that we were received by His Highness Sultan Abdul Kareem El-Fadle, a friendly smile of welcome on his face. He sat upon a velvet mattress, with his personal staff in attendance, while we were offered the usual Persian carpets on the floor, but a kind thought of the Sultan's prompted him to offer me a cushion; he, knowing I was unused to the custom, thought I might find it uncomfortable. Then we were offered Kat leaves to chew and hubble-bubbles—long Eastern tobacco pipes, in which the smoke is bubbled through water before being inhaled. I had a long conversation with His Highness on the recent coronation ceremony in Abyssinia, which I had attended. When evening prayer had been said, with the Sultan as leader or Imam, I was invited to meet the Sultana, in her apartment in the upper part of the palace.

Her Highness was dressed in a very wide gown of shimmering silk with a girdle of woven gold; on her head she wore a black silk handkerchief, exquisitely embroidered with fine threads of spun gold. I was presented to some of the young women relatives, and then the children of the family entered, the palms of their hands vividly stained with henna, and their arms tattoed with strange designs. Her Highness was obviously glad to meet an oriental tourist of her own sex who could speak Arabic, and she questioned me at length about the progress of women in the countries through which I had travelled. I delighted her by producing photographs which I had taken, illustrating customs and dresses in places I had visited,

and she graciously accepted some of these pictures from me.

The Orient is a place of strange contrasts, but I must confess to being surprised when a very modern gramophone was produced, with a great variety of records—mostly of Egyptian music. I remember particularly songs by Miss O. M. Kalthum, the famous Egyptian singer, and also some by Abdul Wahab. I dined with the Sultana in her apartment, while my brother took a meal with the men downstairs; we both stayed that night in the palace.

We were awakened next morning by a great burst of gunfire from mortars in the palace grounds. This salvo indicated the beginning of the great feast of Ramadan—a day sooner than it was announced in Aden. The reason for this discrepancy was a slight difference of opinion regarding the exact phase of the moon! A minor crisis occurred within the precincts of the court when two doubting Thomases continued their fasting, and openly avowed their preference for the Aden calendar. "The infidels shall be beaten," ruled the Sultan. And so they were!

Now that the fasting was exchanged for feasting the people of Lahij made amends for the rigours of the past month. The streets were thronged with sweet-sellers and vendors of all kinds of unfamiliar but attractive dainties. Everywhere was rejoicing, and nowhere more than in the precincts of the palace, where the quantity and variety of food was almost overpowering. That evening at a reception in the palace, the Sultan asked me to deliver some of my verses in Arabic, and I was gratified and rather flattered by the interest and pleasure shown by the guests. Later, His Highness asked me to sit in the place of honour by his side, as he wished to talk with me.

"Tell me," he said, "of the mode of life of women in the many countries you have visited; of the women

of Afghanistan and Abyssinia, who I am told are becoming more and more Western in their manner and habit."

"I will do that gladly, your Highness," I replied, "but first tell me of your education in Lahij, that I may better understand where your customs differ."

"In my Sultanate," said he, "there are schools for boys but not for girls, because it is considered a shameful thing for girls to learn other than what is taught them by their parents as their rightful inheritance."

"I hope your Highness will further consider the matter, and counsel the opening of a school for girls before the year is out," I bluntly ventured to say; to which the guarded reply was: "If I do as you suggest my people will rise against me, as has happened again and again to other rulers in many countries: so I am trying first to educate the boys and young men, so that they will appreciate the desirability of their sisters' education.

"My Sultanate," His Highness continued, with candour, "is unfortunately still backward in many ways: the people are afraid of what is new and strange to them, however beneficial it may be. The Sultana and I submitted to vaccination and publicly proclaimed the fact, in order to induce the people to do likewise. Here we are inclined to treat with morbid fear the least infection of an alien civilisation."

This was in 1930; I am very glad to add that the Sultan has since opened a school for young girls in Lahij, and has brought teachers from Lebanon. Dare I think that this is a direct result of our conversation? My brother and I will always carry memories of the kindly hospitality and courtesy of the Sultan of Lahij—a most intelligent and charming man—a vision, too, of his beautiful palace, glittering white in its colourful surroundings, with the Sultan's personal guard in their striking uniforms lined up at our departure.

CHAPTER XV

HIGH STREET, AFRICA

ZANZIBAR—the very word is like the clash of symbols, a burst of barbaric music heard suddenly as the door to the East swings open. But Zanzibar is a door that opens in two directions. Eastwards there are the trade routes to the far orient, while westwards lies Africa, a continent still darker by far than those who fly headlong over it in the great mail planes would credit.

We came from Addis Ababa by way of Aden and reached Zanzibar Island in nine days of peaceful sailing. Seen from the ocean the island was pure emerald, for the rich foliage appeared to cluster thickly right down to the sapphire water-line; but as we came nearer I saw the red roofs of houses and white walls, and at last a profusion of scarlet flowers was visible among the greenery.

No sooner were we landed than it seemed the wall of green was rolled aside to reveal the strident and crowded streets of the city. All was colour and movement, the babel of innumerable foreign tongues, the flash of bright silks and fantastic garments. For Zanzibar has a population as widely cosmopolitan as any in the world, and in its narrow alleys British, French, Germans, Portuguese and Italians rub shoulders with Arabs, Indians, Chinese, and Negroes, while a rich sprinkling of every oriental race you can mention has been added to the seething mixture.

Even in any one race you will find numerous divisions of dialect or religion. I met Hindus, Buhras, Ismailists (the followers of the Aga Khan, sometimes known as Khoja), Camorians, Sishells, and those of the Shia faith, to name no others. To describe

their differences of dress, of speech, of cranial development, let alone their doctrines, would take more books than I have pages. The mingling of races in Zanzibar must be seen to be believed.

Emerging with difficulty from the bustle and clamour of the port, the streets of which must be the narrowest and most tortuous in the world, the automobile sent to meet us turned into wider and very beautiful thoroughfares leading to the suburb of Sho-andka, where stands the palace of Wali Sharkl Souliman al Lambki, some twenty miles from the centre of the city. Coming to meet us on threshold of his splendid dwelling the Vizier bade us welcome in the name of the Sultan and made us his guests for "as long as you wish to stay—and then one day." This phrase was meant to tell us that not only would his hospitality meet our every wish, but would do always a little more for us than we expected. It was a typical gesture of Eastern welcome, and the Sharkl made good his word. Unobtrusively, and with no embarrassing attentions, he devoted himself to our welfare. Our stay in the island was a wonderful experience of constant kindness and charm.

In his capacity as Vizier—for which title I suppose Prime Minister or Secretary of State would be an English equivalent, he had all the affairs of the island in his firm but kindly hands, serving his Sultan faithfully. His knowledge of the lore of the East was wide and profound. We could have had no better adviser. For all his seventy years, he was young of mind. A figure of patriarchal dignity with beard and turban, he could relish a jest on occasion, and was a master of pointed anecdote. His household ran smoothly with simplicity and ease. The cool, wide rooms were a paradise to return to. Should you ask me to define the perfect host, I would point with gratitude to the Sheik Souliman al Lambki.

Having allowed us a few days to become acclimatised, he approached the Sultan to arrange an audience, and as soon as affairs of State permitted we were received in the palace. The kindness which we had been shown by his chief minister was amply continued by the Sultan Khalifa Ben Harib, a ruler of gentle speech but kingly dignity, a shrewd administrator for all his air of scholarly seclusion.

"You are not my guests alone," he said in greeting, "but the guests of all my people. If you are abroad in the bazaars and have any need of help ask of them freely in my name and you will receive it gladly."

Having asked many questions concerning my travels and having produced from his library the bound volumes of the Arabic papers and magazines for which I had written to prove to me that it was not mere flattery when he said that he knew my work, the Sultan began to speak of his own territories and of their produce.

"Our soil is rich," he said. "Rarely in your travels will you find such perfection of soil. For though it is full of life it has not that over-richness which breeds first a false profusion and then decay. No, it is tempered by sea breezes from the great ocean till it is of a good strong texture, and our plantations flourish, for which mercy let Allah be praised."

He paused reverently, and then continued:

"Cloves are our main crop," he told me. "Write in your book that nine out of every ten cloves the world uses come from Zanzibar. For so small an area that is no mean achievement—what do you say?"

I had to admit that the figure surprised me, which pleased the Sultan immensely, for he had strong national pride. "I do not know the exact figures—those you may get from the Sharki Lambki," he went on, "but our crop for last year was close upon one thousand times one thousand frasias."

SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR

MY FATHER BENEATH THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

ORD ALLENBY WITH PRINCE ABDULLAH OF TRANSJORDANIA

PRINCE MOHAMMED OF BAHREIN

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Since a frasla is just about 35 pounds a little calculation gave me the tonnage—15,625 tons, an enormous quantity of so light a crop. The Sultan smiled to see me figuring out the problem, and courteously forebore to give me additional information till he saw I had the answer. Then he told me that though the whole prosperity of his territory depended on the clove harvest it was only one hundred years since the first seeds were brought to the islands. Subsequently I learned that it was in 1818 that Arabs from the island of Rémmon brought them to the Sultan Said. He saw at once the possibilities of the new seeds, and interested himself in fostering the development of plantations; but the easy-going natives who already had crops enough for their living did not care much for the planting of cloves.

A few trees for their own purposes, yes. Plantations, no. That was too much like work. Besides there was no certainty in their minds that there would be a market for cloves in large quantities. All Sultan Said's efforts were checked by the easy-going natures of his people. At last he was compelled to offer certain slaves their freedom on condition that they would plant the new seeds and tend carefully the crop. Where other means had failed, this worked. Soon there were little plantations everywhere, and all the cloves which they produced were easily sold. Nevertheless, the Sultan was not satisfied. He studied carefully the different plantations, noting especially which bore the heaviest crop. Then he tried to find out why some were more fruitful than others. Was it the seed itself, or the soil, or some point in the husbandry? Little by little he found out the secrets of production, and he left his knowledge to his successors so that from his day it has always been a duty of the Sultans to care for the clove industry.

The clove plantations we were shown surprised me, for I had always thought of the clove as a shrub. Some of the trees were nearly forty feet high. The clove is an evergreen, and its large veined leaves, which are oval and taper to a spear-like point, are of a lovely shining tint. Should the sun catch them they glow like dark emerald. When they are ripe for plucking, the flower buds which are the marketable clove, are a bright red. These flower buds grow in clusters among the foliage, and present a very lovely picture. We were shown trees which were among the original planting, still quite healthy, though not easy to work since the buds which were mostly in the far upper branches were inaccessible. One tree I saw must have been 50 feet in height.

When our first audience was concluded the Sultan said graciously: "In shaa Allah bakir metwahjen saa sitah Kassir roba." "If Allah be willing let us meet again to-morrow a little before the sixth hour." (There are four periods of six hours in the Arab day.)

At our second meeting he told us many more stories concerning the lore of the clove, which was first found growing in the Spice Islands. Right from the very beginning of Western civilisation the nations struggled for the clove trade, for the hot fragrance of the flavour was immensely popular, first with the epicures and then with the mass of the people, while the medicinal properties ascribed to the volatile oil pressed from the plant were many and varied. Now only the dentists make use of it for relief of pain and it, of course, is overshadowed by many more potent synthetic compounds; but even so, it remains in countless homes the household remedy for toothache, and it is probably the best local anaesthetic for such pains in that it has no ill effects whatever.

I did not see the clove picking which comes in August and September, but in order that I might see

how it was done an overseer asked one of his labourers to gather a few unripe clusters. The man grinned cheerfully, and having removed his outer robe, skimmed up the branches with incredible agility, and leaning so that he had both hands free, plucked half a dozen and tossed them lightly down. One bunch I kept as a token, and when I showed it to the Sultan he said: "I am glad that you have those strange little flower buds to remind you of your visit, but let me ask that whenever you taste cloves again wherever you are you will remember Zanzibar."

I promised, and only a few days ago that promise was kept. A piece of delicious but quite ordinary English apple pie was placed before me at a luncheon. I had chosen it in preference to the foreign-named sweets on the menu. I took a mouthful. The first taste was the lovely clean apple flavour which will always recall to me the fruit harvest in the Kentish countryside, scenes which in their sounds and sights and smells I felt were the very essence of England. I took a second mouthful. . . . What was this? All of the East came flooding back to me as I tasted that warm rather acrid sweetness which burned upon my tongue. It was just a little brown clove which my spoon rescued, a little club-like mass of exotic taste and perfume, but in a flash I was back in the thronging byways of Zanzibar, with the noon heat beating upon my forehead and the fierce light striking colours innumerable from the slowly glittering sea. I thought, too, of men venturing many miles in primitive caravels and galleons in search of spices, and of how the Portuguese, the first adventurers to win him were ousted by the Dutch, who, less brilliant at the start in navigation, proved themselves better as colonisers, and dominated the East Indies. There was much bravery shown, but also much greed. To keep their monopoly once they had secured it, the Dutch

committed great cruelties. Having decided that Amboyna and the surrounding islands should be the only centre of production, they went to every other island where the cloves grew and did their best to root out the crops, often inflicting cruel death upon natives who resisted. That little clove on the edge of my plate looked so insignificant that I shuddered to think how much blood had been spilt in the fight to place it there. But when I tried foolishly, I expect, to tell my neighbour all that was in my mind, I was met by kindly blankness. A clove in an apple pie seemed to him a normal and very proper occurrence necessitating no remark.

Not so the Sultan, who said many wise things to me concerning the merchandise of the East, and the ways of men. Day after day as we met for our talk at noon he spread the treasures of a well-stored mind before me. When the Portuguese came to the Eastern waters of Africa they found a great empire centred round Zanzibar. The name was Zenje-, Zenque-, or Zenzibar—meaning "The Country of the Zenj," which name was applied to Arab tribes who had migrated South owing to religious persecution. The foundation of their empire is wrapped in obscurity from which Eastern and Western scholars are attempting to rescue it. That the rule extended many miles to the north is certain, for the three great cities were Kilwa, "the mighty in Faith," Mombassa, "the magnificent," and Muk-dishu (Mogadishu) the Immense. Kilwa, which was the capital, though, like most Eastern capitals of its kind, it found that difficulties of transport and communication prevented a real hold on its subject lands, was famous for its 300 mosques. Very few of the Europeans who now trade in Zanzibar realise that the land has a magnificent history.

My host, the Sultan, spoke with pride of the struggle which the proud Arabs waged against the Portuguese

invaders. Though the three great cities were occupied there was never any surrender. Rebellion against alien rule was preached as the duty of every man able to bear arms, and there was always fighting. Nor were those troubles the only ones. The Turks assailed the land from the sea, and the sinister black hordes from the Zambesi country made a great drive towards the coast. From all this confusion the Arabs eventually emerged as the chief power. The present Sultan's ancestors had won back much of their land by the middle of the nineteenth century. But in the sharing out of Africa between the European nations which took place in that century of wild and ruthless imperialism, Britain, France, Germany and Italy dismembered the Arab territories, each nation sharing the spoils. Only a small part was left to the Sultan, and in the end this too was taken over, a "Protectorate" being instituted in 1890. Six years later a relative of the Sultan revolted, seized power and proclaimed independence, but one shell from a British battleship revealed to him that the odds were too heavy. He abdicated and fled, with the connivance of the Germans, to their territory. It seems plausible that the help he received from them was based on the manoeuvres of the diplomats, who thought it a good thing to have a rival claimant up their sleeves in case a chance should come to embarrass Great Britain. This came during the war, but owing to the firmness and good sense of the present Sultan, the Arabs remained on the side of Britain. Sayyid Khalid, the pretender, surrendered to the British, and there was no revolt. A little-known and very interesting point in the story is that Sayyid Khalid was banished to Saint Helena—this being the only similarity between him and Napoleon. As a matter of fact, he is famous for having fought the shortest war on record. The time which elapsed between his proclamation of independence

(tantamount to a declaration of war with Great Britain) and his flight being exactly six minutes.

The relations between the present Sultan and the British authorities are excellent, for he is very highly respected, his wise advice having been of such use that more and more authority has been placed in his hands. Particularly has Britain cause to be grateful for his help during the war. German territories were near at hand on both sides, and one of the first naval engagements of the great struggle was the sinking of the British cruiser *Pegasus* (an old pattern boat) by the German cruiser *Koenigsberg*. The *Pegasus* was not ready for the attack, for a great deal of her gear was dismantled. She was at anchor in the channel and at the mercy of her attacker. Nevertheless, the attack was a shrewd piece of opportunism, and showed only too plainly the dangers to British rule which would have ensued had the attack from the sea been supported by revolt on land. For the absence of disturbance the Sultan was responsible. Level-headed and with only the good of his people at heart, the Sultan did not heed the intriguers at his elbow nor believe in their specious promises. He spoke to me frankly of the troublous times in which he lived, and emphasised the strategic importance of Zanzibar, quoting the famous proverb: "Who playeth his pipe in Zanzibar, for him all Africa dances!"

That the framer of the proverb should have used dancing as his allegory is natural enough in Africa. The instinct to dance is implanted deep in the heart of every African. Nowhere will you see more dancing than in Zanzibar. Sometimes I was told that the dance was to drive away the devil, and indeed it was noisy and vigorous enough to have served that purpose, but one man to whom I spoke said: "Why do I dance? I dance to feel good." I have translated his words as literally as possible. He meant: "to feel

happy"—but the word had more connotations than that, having the significance of "good" and "whole." He meant that his body felt as one whole. That is I think the psychology of dancing as the Africans practise it. Surrender to rhythm brings a feeling of one-ness to the soul. Surrender to a faith has the same reaction on a higher level of sophistication. This is a parallel which the men of learning would do well to follow up.

In a big arena among the palms and bushy trees where moonlight and torchlight threw contrasting patches of glitter and black shadow, I saw a great evening of dancing. The women clapped their hands to the beat of the drums, and swayed to the wail of the zomari, the clarinet of Zanzibar. Strange tambourines, amazingly decorated, were whirled aloft by the musicians, and as they shook against the night sky the reflected firelight seemed to fall from them in darting sparks of red and silver. First a dance was performed by some twenty men under the direction of a leader. The motions suggested happiness and ease at first, but slowly they worked up to a crescendo of ecstatic leaping. The music was monotonous to the Western ear, and little that you in England would call melody was to be distinguished; but there was a haunting lilt in the thin song-snatches of the reed-pipes and a passionate accentuation of the drum rhythm in the sudden bursts of sound which came from the soloists of that queer orchestra. Now the leader had retired and men in feathered head-dress were leaping around the arena barking and snarling or breaking into the fine-drawn howls of a dog in pain.

At last the dancers approached me as if to threaten, yelping louder than before. A Mohammedan merchant who was at my side whispered that I must not be nervous—this was a great honour. They considered me a distinguished guest and the age-old

purpose of the dance was to force me to part with some share of my luck to my hosts, who would then have good crops and fortunate weather. When the dance was over and I was leaving the scene of the festivities, I noticed a man whose figure, a fine physique indeed, seemed familiar. He was the dance leader, who had controlled the spirited evolutions of his troupe with such uncanny skill.

"My thanks to you for your fine performance," I said to him. "You dance with amazing skill."

He bowed acknowledgement of my praise, lifting his hand in Arab fashion, though there was the blood of other races in his veins.

"Was it an old dance I saw to-night?" I asked him.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "very old."

"Are all your dances old?"

He drew himself up proudly.

"Oh, no," he said, "you must not think that of me. I know the old dances, it is true, and very fine they are; but I am a dance leader—I invent my own steps. See, I will show you——" And without more ado he flung himself into the air with a strange whirling motion, so that it seemed that his arms went one way and his body the other.

"There," he said, "that trick is my own. Come three nights from now and you shall see others."

I complimented him once more on his genius, promised to come again, and passed on, marvelling at what I had seen and wondering what salary such skill would command in Hollywood. But I hoped, somehow, that no film magnate would ever find that friendly dancer, for he looked so well and so happy in his art that I could not bear to think of him transplanted to the land of jazz.

Enquiring as to the nature of the yelping cries, I found they were called "Kiapilio" and were undoubt-

edly a form of salutation to guests even as the merchant had said. I was caught up in a whirl of sight-seeing, and did not see the dance leader again, but I saw other ceremonies of quaintly barbaric nature, of which the most astounding was the "bull fight." No harm was done to the bull, which was simply teased for about fifteen minutes, a cunningly contrived noose about its leg checking it if ever it became dangerous. The end of the tether was passed through a cage where the women spectators were segregated, and I was told that this would ensure their fertility. It does not do to accept such statements too easily, however, for often different people tell you different things. The old beliefs are very vaguely remembered although the ancient ritual is closely followed. The purpose of the bull teasing was, so far as I could gather, to bring rain. The island of Pemba, where the show occurred, is famous for the sport; but just what reasoning was involved in the practice I could not fathom. I was told that the ceremony would bring rain, which was certainly sorely needed at the time, but the only clue to the use of the bull in the ritual was provided for me by the information that it is widely believed around Zanzibar, both by Arabs and by African natives, that the earth is born on the horns of an ox which in its turn is carried on the back of a great stingray which swims in the sea. If you ask what carries the sea they say the wind. If you ask concerning the wind they say that since it is the breath and the will of God no answers need be given concerning it. Wind is to them the ultimate reality beyond which man may not enquire. I recalled the Indian belief that the world is borne by an elephant which stands upon a tortoise or great turtle, for which so far as I know there is no further foundation provided, and it seemed to me that the "wind" dogma is a more subtle and beautiful attempt to reason. I was surprised to find a stingray

taking the place of a tortoise, however, since on an expedition to Tombak, the prison island, where we were taken by Mr. Karimi, a prominent merchant, in his beautiful little steam launch, I saw gigantic tortoises, so huge that four of us could stand on their backs. They might well have inspired confidence in their ability to support the world. Queerly enough, another Zanzibari whom I questioned said that the ox was born by a mosquito, which reminded me of the Christian mystic who said: "Credo quia impossible." *I believe it because it is impossible.*

The island is no longer used as a prison, and the gloomy chambers with iron rings in the brickwork were symbols of a past age. It was a grey day of driving rain (for the bull had apparently done the trick) and I shuddered at the cruel desolation of the prison isle.

On many expeditions, including several journeys inland for considerable distances, I was able to gather much precise information concerning African customs, which I have dealt with in another chapter. The time passed quickly. Rarely did many days pass without our meeting the Sultan, who continued to exercise kindly thought for our welfare. On one occasion he talked concerning the Christian faith, towards which he was tolerant indeed, albeit unswerving in his allegiance to the Prophet. He told me that his race could trace their history back to Adam through the great chief Abir, who was the grandson of Shem. The Prophet, of course, enters into this genealogy and it is through his daughter, Fatima, who was espoused to Ali bin Abi Talib, that descent from his blood is claimed. On the Prophet's birthday the 'Mailidi" ceremony is held. Lamps and incense are carried by the Mullahs and inspiring hymns are chanted in the mosques, the women joining in from behind their grille. Some of the fanatic priests perform extraordinary feats, swallowing burning incense

or driving long nails through both their cheeks without suffering harm. Others plunge swords into their flesh in honour of Allah and his Prophet.

Though Islamic in faith, the natives retain much of their older beliefs, as we have seen, and I came to the conclusion that for many of the population the faith of the Prophet is but a thin skin over far more primitive depths of feeling. They show a weird mixture of doctrines and practices, however, and to penetrate their labyrinthine minds was often beyond me. Their calendar is not Islamic but came to them from Persia. This calendar is based on the Persian solar year, a very well calculated system though rather too technical to enter into here. But I must mention briefly a ceremony which has real beauty and simplicity of thought behind it and which marks the passing of the Old Year. On the night of New Year's Eve the head of each household lights a fire, which at the midnight hour is extinguished slowly with water. The ashes are then solemnly collected and a new fire is lit with one live spark preserved from the first blaze. The "old year" ashes are then taken and deposited at the crossroads. From what I was told I formed the impression that the evils of the past in spirit form were thus prevented from influencing the future. The cross roads would puzzle them and they would not find the right direction by which to return. It is only the ashes of the first fire which are treated in this way. The light grey filmy ash is collected from the second fire and scattered over the rear walls of houses in the neighbourhood. This means good fortune in the coming year.

On New Year's day there is a great carnival with exciting donkey races, wrestling, and all manner of sports, but at the close of it all the population flock down to the sea to bathe and thus start the New Year with their sins cleansed away. No one with strength

enough to walk cares to be left out of that last ritual. One man told me how he got drunk during the carnival and was left to lie in shame while the others bathed. Recovering next day he tried to regain his lost luck by a prolonged immersion, but the sun and stars were not to be turned back in their courses, his time was lost, and the luck with it. That year his olive trees bore only half their previous average crop. It was from this penitent sinner, a cheery Arab who had a fair command of English and was proud of his fascinating smile, that I learned another interesting fact about the clove plantations. There is no system of land tenure in Zanzibar in the sense that the West understands it. Land is valued in terms of what grows upon it and a percentage of the crop is surrendered as rent and taxes in one. All the land is the Sultan's, and no one can own it. I asked the venerable ruler concerning this, and he told me that it was a good rule. He retained ownership, he said, not because he was a tyrant, but because it was the best way to keep the inhabitants of his country prosperous. They cannot gamble away their land nor be cheated out of it, since it all belongs to him. Sometimes they are duped by tricksters concerning the crop, but that is a far less serious matter. "All things come from the righteous earth," said the Sultan, "which it is written belongs to God alone, and all its wealth is His. I hold my land as God's vassal even as the people hold theirs from me. Does not your Christian religion say this, no less than ours?"

It was a question hard to answer. I recalled the familiar text that "the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

"No man, no matter how foolish, shall be robbed of the earth on which he labours," the Sultan said, the kingly dignity of his voice thrilling me. I bowed to his wisdom, thinking that the West might do well

to return to such noble simplicity of thought. Only after continuous tenure for sixty years can land become absolute property.

The Sultan told me that the British authorities had helped him greatly in his efforts to teach modern agriculture methods to his people. Competitions had been instituted and good prizes awarded to the man who did the best with his plot of ground. On land not rich enough in quality for cloves to grow the coconut palm has been installed with great success. Even in the trade depression Zanzibar natives were not so badly hit as most populations, though the shipping houses of the port naturally suffered. Now, however, there is every prospect of fine recovery, and the Mombasa ivory trade is increasing. So also are the copra importations from Tanganyika territory.

The cheerful Arab of whom I have spoken had apparently recovered prosperity after the bad fortune which his intemperance had brought about, and when I met him by chance on a second occasion I learned that he intended to be married. Though I have searched my notebooks for some record of his name I find that it has escaped my pen just as now it escapes my memory, but I have a vivid recollection of the hawk-like profile.

Marriage, I learned, is a complicated affair. The bridegroom's mother approaches the parents of the girl her son wishes to marry, and the bride's people make enquiries as to whether the young man is suitable or not. He is not allowed to see the girl before he weds her. If there is no impediment in the way, the matter of the dowry is settled and half of the sum agreed upon has to be paid at once.

A date for the religious ceremony is fixed by the Mawalin—after studying the influence of the stars. Friends are invited; and on the appointed day the marriage ceremony is performed in a chosen mosque,

the Sheikh taking the part of the girl's parents in the matter of making sure that the remainder of the dowry will be duly paid. Then he reads the Fatha. After that, all read a Surat from the Koran and the Sheikh then says: "Praise be to God and his prophet Mohamed and to his people." They shake hands after that, and then there is a reception, at which the bridegroom must provide the refreshments. These chiefly consist of cooked meat and rice, halwa and other sweets and coffee.

The next ceremony is that of entering the house. At the time fixed the bridegroom goes to the bride's house, or she may be brought to his; but the bridegroom must go to the girl's house if her family are strangers. He goes accompanied by his friends, with crowds of people following behind, and dressed in his best clothes. Only a few of his best friends may enter the house with him. Their feet are washed and oiled by the women. The bridegroom then gives them presents of money, and after a meal they go away, the bridegroom saying good-bye to them outside the house. He returns to the bride's room and does not go out for at least three days and sometimes seven. That period is the honeymoon, during which he actually gives her honey to eat so as to induce her to show kindness to him.

Although girls are taught cooking and domestic work, they have hitherto received no other education. Now, however, Government schools for them are being opened. When she arrives at the age of puberty it is the custom that at her periods her mother must keep her indoors and out of the way of other people. Before marriage, girls receive instruction as to the relationship that should exist between husband and wife.

Like marriage burial is a matter of careful ritual. When a man is near death the medicine man (Maganga)

is called in as the last resort. The women are silent while the Mawalin reads the Yasin from the Koran till death at last comes. Then they go outside and commence wailing. The corpse is laid on bare cords and washed, after which it is placed on a mat to be taken to the grave followed by the mourners. There it is taken from the bier and handed to men who descend to the first level of the grave and lay the body on its right side, with the head in the direction of the East and the face in that of the North. The shroud is then loosened and the cords undone. The left ear must be uncovered and the right ear must touch the ground. A board is finally laid over the cavity and plastered up with clay. The Mawalin pours water which is supposed to reach the left ear. The Yasin is then read by everybody. The burial over, the relatives of the deceased raise a sum of money with which food is bought and distributed among the poor. The widow observes mourning for five months, during which she does not appear in public. When the owner of a home dies it is deserted; in this way many small villages have disappeared.

Lastly let us consider birth. When a child is born the navel string is tied with a cord and cut; the infant is then bathed in cold water and laid on a cloth in a flour sieve in which are placed at its head a lemon, a razor, a silver chain, and its mother's waist beads. The mother is washed in very hot water and made to sit on a bare bedstead over a fire of coconut shells. For about a week, and until the umbilical cord falls off, neither mother nor child goes out. If it is a boy the father obtains seven coconuts—three, if it is a girl. The nuts are cracked and rice is scattered in all directions in the house, and these words are addressed to the devils: "This is your share, big people." They are supposed to be hovering around the newborn child, and the offering of coconut and rice is

believed to prevent their evil influence. A fowl is then killed (a cock if the child is a boy, and a hen if it is a girl), rice and coconut are cooked, and the food is subdivided into four parts: one for the head of the village, one for the Mawalin, one for the parents. The rest is given to the poor. The father then gives a rupee to the midwife for a present.

When the ceremonies are over, for forty days the Mawalin goes to the house every morning to pour water on the mother's head, and at the same time he reads the Ayat from the Koran. After this period the child's head is shaved and a feast held. The hair and the navel string are buried in a spot behind the house, where a coconut tree is planted; if it dies it is considered to be bad luck. Seven different kinds of seed are later sown. When the child is seven or eight years old he goes to school.

All the natives believe in a variety of spirits, most of them being regarded as evil ones functioning in special ways. In the month of Ramadan these are caught by the medicine man and put into bags. I felt one of the bags, and decided that it was empty, but when I made as if to open it to make sure there was a terrible outcry. If I let the evil spirit out it would be disastrous! So what, if anything, was in the bag I shall never know.

Spirits are believed to haunt cross roads. In the more distant villages will be found a pile of offerings, mostly of little value. A handful of grass is enough to buy off the spirit. Even an unripe fruit, a few shreds of tobacco, a sprig of cloves, or some small household pot or ornament. Yet without making these gifts, said a native to me, he would be afraid to face the darkness.

If the sun or moon is black in colour during an eclipse it is believed to be eaten by an eel—if red, by a crab or octopus, or by a snake. Some of the people

told me that they could tell which it was by looking in water for the reflection. I asked them to tell me how, but they refused.

During an eclipse, I learned, they gather on the sea-shore with a terrible riot of drum and song, chanting: "Eel, give us our Moon!" Then they feast voraciously on small fish.

Innumerable minor superstitions exist. It is believed to be bad luck to come across a one-eyed man (first thing in the morning, and even worse to meet a hunchback); but when a man is seen carrying a load it is looked upon as a sign of good fortune—as in Syria, where people in the road shout with delight when a woman is seen coming from a stream or a well with a full jar. One belief I found which is also held in Europe. It is believed to be of ill omen to hand a pair of scissors to anyone: they should be laid down. If they are not then friendship will be ended, say the wise.

For my part I am ready to observe such superstitions—holding friendship so precious that it is to be guarded with all care. And I pray that in these writings I have not offended my many good friends in Zanzibar.

CHAPTER XVI

TANGANYIKA TERRITORY

AFTER our stay in Zanzibar I determined to learn at first hand something of the customs and people in that large area of East Africa known as Tanganyika Territory, formerly the German East African Colony. Dar-es-Salaam, "Haven of Peace," the capital of that country, is but thirty miles across the strait from Zanzibar, so very soon after leaving the island our steamer was threading its way through the narrow palm-fringed entrance to the harbour—spacious enough when once the dangerous channel has been negotiated. My first impression of the town was a pleasant one of yellow beach with graceful palms and flowering gum-trees; of fine white stone buildings and thatched native mud huts, while rising above and beyond and contrasting with the hard blue sky was the vivid green of the thick jungle.

Our arrival in the town coincided with that of Sir George Stewart Symes, the newly-appointed Governor-General of the Territory, and we were fortunate in being invited to the reception arranged in his honour. I had met His Excellency before, when he attended the coronation of the Ethiopian Emperor as representative of Aden and the Nine Sultanates, so I looked forward with great pleasure to the ceremony of his inception. My fellow guests were the Wali of Dar-es-Salaam and the Sherif Salim-El-Attas. Together with more than two hundred other guests we congregated in the big reception room. The Governor-General then took the solemn oath of office, declaring that he would be faithful to his people: do everything within his power to improve their country and

benefit their mode of life; and be loyal to his King. After this, each guest was presented individually to His Excellency and the proceedings became less formal. The next day I again met the Governor-General, who greeted me with a smile and said, "Miss Khoury, you are my shadow. Wherever I go I see you!"

"Yes, Your Excellency," I said, "I have been following you all the time," to which he jokingly replied, "It is very kind of you, because I am beginning to regard it as a good omen."

In Dar-es-Salaam we were the guests of the Arab Association, whose president, Sheik Ali Diebi, very kindly provided us with the most comfortable apartments and all meals and entertainments at no expense to ourselves. In spite of the most oppressive and humid heat I liked this town, with its variety of colour; the coral-red roofs and red-brown roads; the waving palms on the yellow shore; the whole scale of greens in its tropical foliage, and the clean, sun-bleached white of the native kanzas—long smock-like garments worn by the Swahili men. Very smart, too, were the "askari"—a picked body of native policemen from the King's African Rifles—with their shorts and wide belts, neat rolled puttees and tasselled tarbushes.

On the occasion of His Highness the Agha Khan's birthday I was invited by the Khoja, or Ismailist Ladies' Society to a tea party, there to deliver a lecture on my impressions of the East. Very pleasant it was to see the progress of the Khoja women in this part of Africa, and I was delighted when their president suggested that I should visit the women's mosque. As is the custom, I entered the mosque barefoot and was shown the throne from which His Highness addresses the women of his faith whenever he visits the locality. The throne was draped with the most

beautiful silks and rich velvets, while strewn over it were handfuls of rose petals of all shades. The petals are carefully preserved afterwards, to be taken away by the women as sacred souvenirs; I have some of them among my most treasured possessions. Over the throne is a portrait of His Highness wearing ceremonial garlands of flowers; opposite are the portraits of his son and heir-apparent, Prince Ali, and of the Begum Agha Khan. After a special prayer had been said for His Highness there were traditional songs, dances and games for the women, many of whom wore charming saris; some even had diamond pendants in their noses. Later the same day, I was asked to attend a similar gathering by the Ismailist Men's Society, the principal guest at which was the Governor-General. His Excellency, speaking of the Agha Khan, said that no matter where he had been, in Yemen, Egypt or more distant countries, always had he been impressed by the devotion and loyalty of the Ismailist people to their leader. As on this occasion I was asked to speak, I thought it opportune to wish His Highness long life and happiness in a few lines of Arabic verse.

During my short stay in Dar-es-Salaam the Wali of Bagamoyo, old sea-port and capital of Tanganyika, died, so thinking I would go to the funeral, when the day arrived I set out with the president of the Arab Association and the Wali of Dar-es-Salaam. Our car journey of twenty miles or so to Bagamoyo was from the beginning a chapter of accidents. While we were crossing some desert land but half an hour after starting the wheels of our car suddenly sank to the hubs in the soft sand. Fortunately we were able to find some Swahili peasants, who, after two hours' hard work with long wooden poles, were able to dig out the car. Next we came to a wide stream,

only to find that recent heavy rains had swept away the bridge we were to have crossed; pieces of it were there, sticking up at all angles from the bed of the stream, but that did not help us! However, as luck would have it the stream was not very deep, and we eventually managed to ford across it in the car at the expense of a considerable wetting. We reached Bagamoyo six hours late—just in time to meet the mourners returning from the cemetery.

After offering our condolences to the Wali's relatives and friends we had a short rest and some refreshment, but then I insisted on starting the return journey at once, as it was already late and I had an appointment with the Governor-General at ten o'clock the following morning. But our troubles were not yet over, for on the way back the most unexpected things happened. When again crossing that same patch of desert one of our tyres became punctured, and after much bumping and lurching we stopped dead. I have called this particular patch of land "desert," because of its sandy nature, and by way of contrast to the impenetrable East African Jungle; there was, however, some scrub and low bushes, and quite evidently wild life there too, for in the silence resulting from the stopping of our car engine, we began to hear uncanny and disconcerting sounds. Peculiar and half-human bird calls; sudden rustlings: quick little sounds, and then all at once quite near at hand, a grunt. Then it was that we saw quite clearly in the light of our headlamps two lions, their eyes smouldering balls of red fire. They stood as if transfixed; fascinated by the unfamiliar spectacle.

We waved the beams of our electric torches in their direction, but without effect.

"Will they attack?" I asked one of the Arab gentlemen of the party.

"No, never," he replied, "according to the books of the white hunter, but all the same, I will have my rifle." He fired a volley of shots, and the lions moved off slowly, but round the circumference of a circle with us at the centre. Then they were in the shadow, and we lost sight of them.

I suppose we were safe enough in our small steel fortress, with our bright lights and our rifle, but I must admit that I was greatly relieved when, the puncture being mended, we were once more on our way. This was not the end of our adventures, but the next incident had the anti-climax of indignity compared with our previous taste of danger. The Wali, who was at the wheel, was misled by the appearance of a pond covered with a layer of salt, and mistaking it for dry land precipitated us all into the middle of this dirty and stagnant pool. We got into the most terrible mess; our clothes were spoilt and our tempers more than frayed when, miraculously, some friendly natives appeared and helped us to remove ourselves and our car from the quagmire. We were glad to tip them in a grossly extravagant way. When at last we got going again it was to see the novel spectacle of dozens of rabbits running from one bush to another and careering along ahead of us, hypnotised by our headlights. The air around us too, was bright with hundreds of fire-flies, but we were hardly in the mood to appreciate the beauties of the tropical night. Just before dawn we crept into Dar-es-Salaam again—a sad little party; but I was able to keep my appointment.

The great territory of Tanganyika—nearly four hundred thousand square miles in extent, and having a population of five million, is divided into twenty-two districts. The natives are mostly of the Swahili race, which is composed of mixed Arabic and African

stock, and apart from some quarter of a million Muslims in districts near the coast they are nearly all pagans; with them the witch doctor reigns supreme, and ancient customs and prejudices die hard. The Swahili language is a mixture of Portuguese, Arabic and Negro tongues; it is rather flexible and inclined to be mixed with local dialects, however, so that if one does learn a smattering in one district it may not be of much use in places a hundred miles distant. The foreign element in Tanganyika consists in the main of about ten thousand Indians, half that number of Arabs, and surprisingly, little more than eight thousand whites. In the north of the Territory are numbers of the fierce and haughty Masai—a nomad people, tall and chocolate-coloured. They are born fighters and cattle-rustlers, and have a curiously strict system of age-classes amongst the men, the climax of which is the warrior period. Smeared with mutton-fat and weirdly daubed with clay and ochre, their terrifying appearance is increased by their habit of removing the two incisor teeth from the lower jaw. Their diet consists almost solely of blood and milk, a fact which may account for their barbaric nature. However, they seem to get on well enough with the authorities in Tanganyika, but they are an austere people, not easily changed in habit.

All Swahili women in East Africa have holes bored in their ears for the wearing of ornaments. When a child is born the holes are made by the mother, to be later used for ear-rings of twisted paper, beaten metal, odds and ends of wire or any glittering metal object thought to be fascinating. In some tribes the women have a hole bored in the upper lip, which later grows large enough to enable an ornament as big as an ash-tray or small plate to be fixed; in such cases the unfortunate wearer is obliged to raise her upper lip by hand when eating. Very popular, too,

in some districts, are ankle bracelets of copper wire; these are occasionally wound so tightly that the circulation of the blood is impeded and the leg grows deformed. I had wondered where these people got the bright red-gold wire for their personal adornments, until I was told that the internal telegraph services of Tanganyika are subject to unexpected breakdown!

Mention of the telegraph reminds me that in this country the poles which support the wires are made longer than usual, owing to the inclination of the giraffe to nibble at anything within reach. This mild and inoffensive sport of Nature exists in large numbers and is the national emblem of Tanganyika. Other wild life abounds, perhaps in variety and quantity richer than in any other part of the world. Indeed, if you are lucky a train journey through certain parts of the Territory resembles a visit to some vast zoological garden; great herds of elephants there are; antelopes, rhino and hippo; lions—whole family gatherings of them; zebras—bland vulgarians of the bush; leopards and hyaena; baboons and ostriches. Lower in the scale of life are snakes in great number, unnoticed by the casual traveller, but none the less insidious. But it is among the smallest creatures that is found the greatest bane—the dreaded tsetse fly. Much more than half Tanganyika is ridden by this sinister striped carrier of sleeping sickness, against which continual brave war is waged by field and laboratory workers.

Since the Great War the educational system of Tanganyika has been entirely reconstructed, and there are now about a hundred schools under Government direction. Of these, perhaps the most interesting and significant is the great "public" school at Tabora, with its curriculum specially arranged for the education of the sons of chiefs. Tabora is the principal

inland town of the Territory, but as it is some five hundred miles from Dar-es-Salaam, unfortunately I was unable to go there during my travels. However, I learnt much about the school there from Government officials and others. There is no doubt that it is the apple of the eye of the Education Department; but one does wonder whether the money lavished on it should not have been distributed over a wider area. Against this it can be quite truly argued that the best way to sow the seeds of culture in the people at large is to educate their chiefs; so that through them the people will be inspired with a desire for wider knowledge.

The new school is a grey, stone structure built around a quadrangle, and very sensibly, it has been provided with one really large hall. Here, among other subjects, the boys are taught the elements of law; geography, history and science; some book-keeping, in order that they may understand the financial side of their administrations; and something of Western ideas of agriculture—the necessity of breaking and turning the earth (the plough is a novelty in this country), rotation of crops, and similar things.

Another most important Government school is the one at Moshi, right under the shadow of Kilimanjaro with its snowy peak rising almost twenty thousand feet. Kilimanjaro, "The Great Mountain," is the highest in the African continent, and is one of the boundary marks between Kenya and Tanganyika. On its slopes, they say, winter sports may be enjoyed within two hundred miles of the equator. The school at Moshi is a large establishment for boarders, and there are some hundreds of boys of ages up to eighteen years. A modified form of the "house" system is in force, and the pupils have impressed upon them the importance of cleanliness and neatness as well as physical fitness and self-

reliance; there is indeed a suggestion of military discipline about the training at this school. As for the curriculum, a feature is made of handicrafts and useful trades—such as wood, stone and metal-work, as well as hygiene and agriculture.

Although the number of natives who receive any education at all is still lamentably low, there is no doubt that much real progress has been made—especially in the last fifteen years.

Of course there will always be a minority of opinion to contend with that it is a mistake to educate the native, because it gives him "big ideas," and spoils his capacity for hard physical labour. There is also the equally foolish and unethical parrot-cry of the sentimentalist "hands off the noble savage!" Why? Because of accidents of heredity and environment is he permanently to be denied a richer life—a wider horizon of experience?

Here perhaps I should emphasise the real difference between the Indirect Rule system instituted by the British in this mandated territory, and the harsher Direct Administration of the old German colony. Under this latter system the Central Government, through its own agents, ruled the natives rigidly and absolutely. The tribe as such, with its customs and traditions had no part in the scheme, and was therefore likely to disappear in time. On the other hand, with the principle of Indirect Rule the machinery of law, education, agricultural improvement, tax-gathering, etc., is very largely in the hands of the native chiefs and their elders. And—a most important distinction—the chiefs, although acknowledged by the Government, are not appointed by it; they either inherit their chieftainship, or are elected by their own people.

I was told an amusing story as an illustration of

the fact that under Indirect Rule, so long as the Native law conforms to certain principles of Western justice, any idiosyncrasies due to local custom and tradition are overlooked by the white District Commissioner. A man was discovered scraping up some earth on which another man had urinated. Although the man would not admit the fact, it was almost certain that his action was prompted by the desire to obtain something personal of his enemy's for purposes of witchcraft. He was fined heavily by the native court. Now, strictly according to the letter of Western law the sentence could not stand, as the accused's action could hardly be deemed to be theft, and there had not actually been any illegal practice of witchcraft. However, the sentence was not repealed by the white District Commissioner, as he realised that although the man was fined ostensibly for theft, the punishment was really for attempting to put a spell on his enemy.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WOMEN OF AFRICA

MANY people in England who think of Africa in terms of missionaries' stories imagine that the African child is a sad, weary little creature, cruelly treated and dragging out a miserable existence. Cruelties are no doubt committed, but they are usually the result of fear and ignorance, and are not like those awful cases of deliberate torture which occur more frequently in England than most people care to believe and which the R.S.P.C.C. exists to reveal. Cruelty in Africa springs largely from superstition, and is inflicted with the best intentions for the supposed good of the tribe—much as the torture of heretics was carried on years ago in Europe, and still is to-day, though it is now political heresy which the Fascist Inquisition strives against in vain. It is hard to pass general judgments and not always wise, but from what I have seen of the Western civilisations a vast amount of coldly deliberate cruelty is carried on beneath their thin veneer. Christian peoples have their own house to set in order before they decry the African "savage." He is usually of a disposition both childlike and mild.

So it was not weary, stunted childhood which I saw in the African villages I visited, but blithely frolicsome and delightfully mischievous "kinderspiele," watched over by parents who always seemed to love their children, and who prayed for more.

I have watched an African husband and wife prostrate themselves together to pray that their tribal deity will grant them within a named number of years so many boys and so many girls. I asked them as

well as I could whether they thought that their prayer would be exactly answered. They said they were sure that it would. "The spirit will give us children when we ask for them," said the man, "for were our tribe to die out the spirit must die too."

I learned that the father had previously killed a sickly child. But such deeds are not cruelty in our sense of the word, for they are found in all parts of the world where the struggle for existence is hard and where the tribe cannot afford to be burdened with those who cannot fend for themselves. I have often thought that the extravagances of the medicine men have grown more and more outrageous through the years because they were largely a device on the part of old men to escape killing as a burden. In order to survive they pretended to have a wisdom which was essential to the safety of the tribe. In some ways they did have real knowledge which was valuable, but this was insufficient to make a really powerful impression, so bit by bit they elaborated useful knowledge into the most horrible and fantastic forms, finding that fear was their strongest weapon. I throw this out as a theory only. Human behaviour springs from such mingled sources that no one line of reasoning is sufficient to cover all the ground.

One of the most terrible deeds I came upon was the treatment of twins, which are regarded by some African tribes as a great evil, for which the woman is to blame. I tried to find out what was the root of the terrible fear which led one tribe to kill both twins at birth and to drive out the mother from her village. It was apparently so terrible a secret that it could not easily be spoken of, but I gathered that it was thought that one or both of the children must be the progeny of a devil, who had lain with the mother secretly. Sometimes, I was told, the witchdoctor could distinguish which of the children was the devil's, and then the

other child was spared. It was a question of birth-marks, I fancy, but I was unable to determine exactly what line of divination was employed. No one, not even those who are nearest and dearest to her, will raise a hand to aid a woman cast out for the sin of bearing twins. And the woman herself is convinced that she is blameworthy, so that if in her wanderings in the wilds she is offered help, she will at once confess her shame and urge the stranger to depart lest the curse fall on him.

Under European administration such customs as this are dying out, but even where control is exercised it is my personal belief that a great deal goes on which the officials never hear about. I found the fact that I was of Arab blood was very much in my favour when true information was desired. My mind was more sensitive to the *genus loci* of desert or forest than was the mind of the average European. I could guess more easily at what a cryptic phrase concealed.

While I have no extensive knowledge of Africa, and write as a traveller merely and not as a skilled ethnologist, I felt often among the more advanced tribes that the position of women was more healthy and dignified than it is in many parts of the Asiatic world. This impression came upon me quite strongly, though I found it difficult to collect much detailed evidence to prove my case. In the first place, I discovered that whereas throughout most of the Asia I knew the birth of a girl was regarded as a misfortune, in Africa it is a joyous event. The reason is pecuniary in the most exact sense of the word—*pecunia*, if I remember rightly, being the Latin word for cattle. In Africa a man has to buy a wife—the dowry, which is usually an ox, being paid to the bride's parents, and not by them. In fact a batch of really marriageable daughters will often convert a poor man into a rich one. Roundness and sleekness

seem to be the qualities which the young African most prizes in his bride, regularity of features coming lower on the list. Discreet enquiries are made as to the young lady's culinary accomplishments, and very often it is the parents who undertake the negotiations. Nevertheless, marriages are not always affairs of convenience by any means. It is true that the young man needs a wife because life without one is not likely to be comfortable. His wife will cook his meals for him and minister to his needs. Also, he wishes to have sons and daughters—the daughters to barter for cattle, the sons to marry and build their huts round his so that in time he may become the lord of a large clan, with a huge kraal and many cattle. "I was blessed with many grand-daughters," said one old scoundrel to me. "They were all smooth and fat, and so—thanks be to Christ—were the cattle that I received for them." These are obvious blessings of marriage—but in choosing his wife the African is swayed very much by desire.

Among the Bantu tribes proposal of marriage is made, so it seemed to me, very much on European, indeed on English lines—or on what I am told were English lines in the Victorian age. But the Bantu youth has an amusing device by which he avoids the scorn of a refusal from the maiden at whose feet his heart is laid. Sitting down before her as she walks through the kraal, he places a stone at her feet. She pauses at once and looks down on him.

"Pretty one," he says, "do not think that it is I who speak to you now. It is this stone that speaks. Listen."

There is a brief pause while both listen.

"Now, do you hear it?" asks the youth. "Can you not hear what it is saying?"

The maiden never can hear.

"It is saying: I love you," says the suitor—though

perhaps the word means want or need rather than love.

There is another pause, for no maiden is easily won.

"Listen, listen," says the youth. "There—you have heard what the stone is saying. Now it is you who must speak to the stone."

If the maiden picks up the stone all is well, unless she throws it down immediately, which has been known, for African maidens know how to tease and torment. If she keeps the stone in her possession the suitor is accepted.

Even now the marriage may still go awry, for a long wrangle will take place between the parents over the question of the "bride-price." The Africans, as I can testify from many personal glimpses, love nothing better than a long tussle over a projected bargain. They seem to derive a fierce physical pleasure as well as mental stimulus from the complicated hagglings. There is an air of ballet about the proceedings, each point in the argument being dramatised by the man who makes it. Irrelevancies are delighted in. Almost, it might be said that the most skilled bargainer is he who succeeds in throwing so many red herrings across the trail of the argument that his opponents succumb from sheer bewilderment and weariness.

So at last the deal is completed.

If in the course of a year or two the young man finds that his riches warrant it, he will take a second wife. The first wife will not resent it in the least, being glad, in fact, that she has someone "junior" to her who she can order around, and who will share the work. Bitter jealousies sometimes arise if the newcomer wins too much power over the man; but a wife of faded charms will not resent the coming of a young and beautiful bride who excludes her almost

entirely from the physical affections of her husband provided that her authority in the matters of the home is not seriously undermined. When this occurs African women have been known to wreak terrible revenges on their sister brides.

So, too, have rejected maidens upon those who have defeated them in the struggle to win a handsome young boy. For the wooing is not always from the male side. The African girl is sometimes a "shameless hussy," and chases her man. The arts by which she seeks to arouse him are quite delightful to behold, though frowned on by the more severe among the missionaries. The mail order catalogue having now penetrated into the most unlikely places—I saw one being gravely discussed by some natives many miles inland from Zanzibar—European finery is now sometimes employed in the snaring of the desired one. But in spite of the restlessness and general *malaise* which the influx of the West has produced in many parts of the dark continent, I had a feeling that the African woman will win through. The shameless hussy has at least one virtue—she knows her own mind, and acts accordingly. That is no mean achievement. Freedom, even misused freedom, is better than slavery. With the slave mind you can do nothing. Its acceptance of teaching is just dull acquiescence. The modern missionary knows that only the awakening of independent thought makes for genuine conversion. The African woman appeared to me to show more capacity for thinking with her own mind than did some more apparently civilised women further East.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROMANTIC PEARL ISLANDS OF BAHREIN

ONCE, while on my way back from India, I learned that my journey to Iraq might easily be broken at the Bahrein Islands, so I determined to surprise my friend, the Sheik Hamad, by making an unexpected call upon him. At Bombay I made the necessary passport arrangements and then took passage on the steamer *Varella*, a P. & O. boat which, though it does not actually touch the islands, moors some distance away from them in order to put intending visitors ashore in motor launches.

The monsoon had broken and we had a very rough voyage. There was continual rain and wind and we shipped a good deal of water. I was thankful that I am a good sailor, for it was a terrible time for those who were sensitive to the motion of the sea.

Three days after leaving Karachi we had our first sight of the islands. The wind had now dropped and the sea was calm. Nevertheless I could see the breakers thundering on the yellow sands of the shore. Beyond were the slender palms and clusters of thatched huts. Soon the palace of the ruler came into sight, rising nobly above the surroundings. It is a fine European building, three storeys high, very white and majestic, surrounded by lovely gardens and approached by an impressive avenue of stately trees.

The town of Manana straggles along the sea shore, and it was clear that a large crowd had collected at the waterside to welcome our ship. This was because many notable chiefs of the island were on the boat. I had made good friends with them all, and had received invitations from them to stay beneath their

roofs, but when they learned that I knew their ruler they told me that it was certain that I should be made welcome at the palace, and that they could not offer me hospitality, as it would be certain that the Sheik Hamad would be offended. As there are not hotels on the island the traveller is forced to rely on the traditional hospitality of the Arab, but nowhere is it more freely given.

Motor launches now put off from the low stone jetty on the seafront and soon we were safe on shore. Jusuf Khano, a chief who was with us on board the steamer, insisted at once on placing his car at our disposal, and thus we drove to the palace down the stately avenue.

I was surprised to see how smooth and clean the main streets were, while the number of motor cars amazed me. I had pictured camels everywhere, but so prosperous have the islands become that more modern if less picturesque methods of transport are everywhere to be found.

When we arrived at the palace we went into the huge entrance hall, reached by a wide stairway of white marble. There I saw a huge gold clock with swinging pendulum. I was to learn to love the hammer-beat ticking of this great monster, whose chime at midnight—six strokes, according to the Arab clock-face, which has only six hours, so that the complete circuit is made four times in the day—rang with a strange silvery booming through the sleeping house.

A servant in Arab costume informed us that the Sheik could not receive to-day owing to temporary indisposition, but within a few moments of my card having been sent up to him, I was overjoyed to see the Sheik himself, a fine figure of a man, descending the stairs.

"Ya halla, Ya halla," he said, as I kissed his hand, which is our Arab custom when greeting one of rank

and years. Ya halla is really a contracted form of the Arabic "ahalan wa sahalan" which means: "You come here as one of our family—this house is your home."

"My son is to be married," said Sheik Hamad. "Your coming is but another joy at a time of joys. You shall stay with us and share our gladness."

He then gave orders that a room should be prepared for us, saying that my divan should be that on which only the Philosopher Amin al Rihami had slept before me! I protested that this was too great an honour, but Sheik Hamad insisted that a poetess, which he was pleased to call me, might fairly take rank with a philosopher.

We were now handed over to the secretary who took us on a tour of the palace grounds, showing us, among other things, the famous stables where the race-horses of Bahrein, of famous Arab pedigree, are bred.

The Ruler of Bahrein, His Highness Sir Sheik Hamad Bin Issa al Khalifa, is descended from a long line of famous rulers whose great deeds are celebrated in song and story, and few monarchs of the East can be so loved and venerated by their subjects. For his rule has brought peace and prosperity to his people. The islands over which he reigns are inhabited by happy and hard-working men and women who get a fair share of the wealth which they produce. This opinion did not come to me from official sources. I heard it expressed on all sides among the common people. One old man, whose long white beard betokened many years, told me that he could remember the bad old days when all was far from well in Bahrein —"But since the ascent of the good Bin Issa to power each year that passes increases our blessings. . . ." While some credit undoubtedly is due to the British, who exercise advisory influence with admirable discretion, no less an authority than Colonel Barrett, the British Consul in Bahrein, assured me that but for

the steadfast devotion to duty shown by Sheik Hamad little of the progress of recent years would have been possible.

When I came to the Bahrein Islands with my brother we were the guests of His Highness in the royal palace of Manana. My friendship with Sheik Hamad and his wife was of some years' standing, for when His Highness was returning from Europe in 1925 I chanced to be on the same steamer. It was then that I received the invitation to stay at the palace, though I little thought at the time that it would ever be possible for me to travel so far.

However, the day was to come when I should see the coastline of Bahrein drawing nearer across the deep blue waters, when rose water would be poured upon my hands in welcome and incense burned in my honour—for such is the custom of the islands—and when I should hear the soft voice of the wife of Sheik Hamad say to me in greeting: "Ana fil hulm am fi al yagza?"—which, translated from the Arabic, means —"Do I dream, or do I truly see you here before me?"

I was soon received ceremonially by the Sheik Hamad, the ceremony taking place in his audience hall, where each day, both before and after noon, he sits in state to receive his subjects. Waiting amid the motley crowd, I noticed that little if any distinction was made in favour of wealth or rank. Rich merchant or poor labourer had equal right of access to their ruler, and all waited in orderly fashion for their turn.

Seated upon a raised throne in the centre of the room, the British official adviser on one hand and his brothers on the other, Sheik Hamad motioned for his people to come near him. The throng moved forward, gathering in a wide circle round the throne.

When all were in place each man in the crowd placed his hand first upon his forehead and then upon his breast, bowing deeply.

"Salaam Alaikum. . . . Peace be with you . . ." came from a hundred loyal throats.

"Salaam Alaikum . . ." answered Sheik Hamad. The crowd then drew nearer and the audience commenced.

"Ya Halla, ya halla . . ." You are welcome. . . . With these words the Sheik bade them be seated. This they did, none turning his back upon the Sheik. The chief officials were provided with chairs by servants who now came forward; those of lesser rank were seated on the rich Shirazi carpets or on divans of beautiful workmanship and bright colours. As a guest of the Sheik I was given a chair quite close to him.

I now gazed at the seated throng. The rich men wore ikals, the circular Arab head-dress, which were richly woven with bright gold. The poor men were content with ikals of black wool. But save for this there was no mark of rank to be seen, for the long white robes were worn by rich and poor alike. I was struck by the friendliness of those brown faces. There was none of that strained expectancy which so often lies beneath Eastern calm when benefits are hoped for from a capricious ruler. These men came as guests, as brothers of their Lord. The teachings of the Koran were here given full effect.

There was little speech as yet, for now we were to drink coffee. The coffee bearer approached with cups and kettle. He carried no tray, but eight or ten cups fitting one into the other were balanced ingeniously in his left hand, while in his right he held a huge silver "kettle" with long, slender neck and bulbous base. When it came to my turn I saw that this flask was beautifully engraved with flowers and serpents.

Beginning with the ruler, the coffee bearer poured one quarter of a cupful for each guest. I tasted the dark brown fluid and found it rich and fresh in flavour and very stimulating, but to my somewhat Westernised

taste it proved very bitter. When all were served a second round commenced, and I saw the coffee bearer approaching me. I did not want any more, but how was I to refuse? All round the room people were drinking eagerly. . . . At this moment the Sheik Hamad divined my hesitation. "Shake your cup, my daughter," he whispered. "That is the sign of refusal. He who holds it steady shows satisfaction and the wish for more."

After that poems in his praise were recited by some of his audience in the most beautiful tune.

At last the audience was concluded and His Highness rose. Once more respectful greetings were exchanged between the ruler and his people, and then he withdrew for luncheon after which the crowd filed out slowly, no man seeking to elbow his neighbour and all walking with dignity and freedom of stride. Right to the last I was impressed by the atmosphere of calm liberality in which His Highness moved. Always in its highest forms the Mahommedan Faith engenders such simplicity.

Lunch in the palace was a very plain and wholesome meal, the cooking reaching perfection. Rice, which we ate with our right hand, was called "aish," and its preparation was strangely similar to the Afghan pilaw. While the main essentials of the dish did not vary from day to day, monotony was avoided by skilful changes in the sauces which were served. I wish that I could describe those flavours, but their subtleties elude me. All I can say is that a fortune awaits the chef who is enterprising enough to travel the East notebook in hand seeking to make intelligent adaptation of oriental delicacies for Western palates; and he must on no account omit the Bahrein Islands from his itinerary.

At every meal milk was served plentifully as a drink. The bread was very fine wide wafers and

excellently baked; it was even thinner than its counterpart in Mount Lebanon, and I liked it rather better, for its taste was more nutritious. Plain food in well-cooked abundance was always the rule in the palace. Meat was not absent from the diet though all ate of it sparingly. Once at a minor celebration I saw a whole cooked sheep placed on the top of a huge "pilaw." It was carried in on a big tray by two servants, and very appetising it looked, garnished with small piles of dates. A third servant brought a large jar of cool milk of very rich flavour, and this was served to us as we ate of the main dish. Offering the whole sheep over the rice is a sign of respect to the guest.

Coffee, which was the ceremonial drink of Bahrein, as it is so often in the East, was prepared there from a special recipe and is quite distinctive in flavour. I dare say that in time I should have acquired the taste for this coffee, for it is undoubtedly made with great skill, but I found that its bitterness was not easy to get used to. On one occasion His Highness, noticing how slowly I sipped from my cup, smilingly informed me that it was the cardamon which is ground into the coffee which I found not to my taste. For the rest, he said, the coffee was of good Arabian quality such as I should drink at home. "We are very proud of our coffee, you know," he told me, "and a servant who is good at making it can always command excellent wages. My coffee maker is the best in all the islands, and he would be very distressed to learn that you were not pleased. You must stay with us until you learn to appreciate our coffee. The secret of its preparation is very old. There was a time when only kings might drink it."

My arrival in Bahrein, very fortunately for me, happened to come just at the time of the wedding of the Sheik Hamad's son, Shaik Khalifa. It was a wonderful wedding, and I congratulated myself on

having come in time for the many dazzling celebrations. Festivities continued for nine days and nine nights, with all manner of dancing and music, but by strange custom entertainments were held separately for men and women.

Invited to the final ceremony by the mother of the bridegroom, I went with her to her spacious and beautifully appointed dwelling where her son's bride awaited us some little while before the celebration was to commence. As we entered the long "salon" where the guests were assembling, my attention was caught by the long line of small mirrors round the walls. Garments of rich silk were hung between these gleaming mirrors, and their bright embroideries, red and silver and gold, looked very splendid when they caught the light.

With the exception of the wife of the Sheik and myself all the women guests were veiled, for that is the purdah custom in the islands. The veils, which are of black-musk colour, leave only two small holes for the eyes, and must be worn even for eating though no man is present. "Why do you cover your face, my sister?" I asked of one of my neighbours. "Am I a 'ryal' that you hide from me?" (Ryal is their word for man.)

"Hast aku wajid aib," was the answer. "It is a shameful thing for women to see each other."

"Why?" I persisted. "What reason have you for thinking thus?"

She could give me no reason, but insisted with great warmth that the custom was right.

Turning to my hostess I whispered a bold request. Might I see the bride? This was a great deal to ask, for I knew that she sat hidden behind a curtain at the far end of the room and that she had been there for eight days, seeing no one and saying no word. I doubt very much if my request should have been granted, but the wife of the Sheik, always a kind

friend to me, not only gave the necessary permission, but took me herself behind the screen. There she asked her future daughter-in-law to remove her veil for a moment that one who had journeyed many miles to do her honour might see her beauty.

The girl was indeed very lovely to look upon. Robed in red silk, and with hands and feet dyed with henna, she sat on a high silk cushion, a strange blend of womanly dignity and childish delight showing in features which had the clean, sculptured line of Arab blood at its best. Golden embroidery glistened at her every movement, and in her hood, or "abaia," of soft white wool were ornaments of gold. Her hair was decked with at least one hundred tiny braids, and adorned at the back with many tinkling coins. It seemed to me that a coiffure so ornate and so beautiful must be a very long and wearisome affair, but I was assured that an expert dresser would take little more than fifteen minutes. "It is so easy when you know how," said the bride's mother. "See, I will show you." And in a few seconds her cunning fingers had twisted a strand of my hair into the required design. As her hands worked the narrow gold rings upon her fingers flashed merrily. The bride, too, had rings in plenty, a ring on every finger, and one of broader and heavier pattern on each of her big toes.

"Do you think my daughter-in-law beautiful?" asked the bridegroom's mother, when I emerged from behind the curtain.

"Zena, zena! !" I said with emphasis. Beautiful, beautiful . . . !

I was then told that in Bahrein it is the custom that the bridegroom's mother shall not see the bride until the day of the ceremony (the husband, of course, is strictly debarred from any sight of the girl). It is the fathers of the couple who, with their advisers, draw up the contract of marriage; and once it is signed

it is binding upon the man even should his bride turn out to be terribly ugly and even if she is dumb or blind or lame.

The prohibition of any meeting between bride and future mother-in-law arose, I was told, in a curious way. At one time it was actually the duty of the man's mother to seek out a beautiful bride for her son. This was a very difficult task for the mother. Either she hesitated too long, thinking no woman good enough for her son; or she chose a bride to the best of her ability, only to be overwhelmed with reproaches from a dissatisfied bridegroom. So little by little public opinion came to demand for the sake of peace and quiet within the family that the mother should be relieved of so heavy a responsibility. Now the arrangements are in the hands of the fathers and the men of law. It works much better that way, they find. In fact, even after marriage the bride never shows her face to other women—the habit remaining from pre-marriage days when it was so important that her future mother-in-law should not see her.

After the bride had been carried to the bridegroom's house there was a magnificent display of dancing. Their movements were wonderful, and each wore a "abaia" of a different colour. All greeted me gaily when I was presented to them, and one showed me how to beat the drum which she carried. As evening drew on I saw the light of a big fire in the palace grounds, and thought at first that a sheep was being roasted in the open air; but when I asked what was happening I was told that the fire was lighted to heat the drums for this improved their tone.

After the marriage I had many talks with the Sheik's young bride, and found that unlike the woman to whom I had spoken concerning the veil, she had a very modern outlook combined with a deep regard for the traditions of her race.

CHAPTER XIX

BAHREIN MEMORIES

GAILY I went about the islands collecting impressions everywhere of industry and progress. Bahrein is the largest of the group. Of its neighbours Manana, Muharraq, Sitra, and Nabi Salih are inhabited, the remainder of the islands being too small for permanent habitation. Natural harbours are few, and the twenty miles of sea which separate the islands from the Arabian shore are feared for their dangerous currents. Nevertheless, a motor launch service to the mainland is possible for a large part of the year, while in between the islands there is frequent communication in craft of all kinds.

Manana, the commercial capital, is also the summer residence of His Highness the Sheik Hamad, while the winter palace is at Muharraq. These two islands will soon be joined by a fine bridge; while the excellent road system on both of them is always in process of extension. The population on each island is about 2,500, of whom not more than 70 are Europeans.

The history of the islands is not yet traced back with any degree of certainty to ancient times, but it seems that the first colonisation of Bahrein was the work of the Phoenicians. They were, in truth, a wonderful people to have gone so far afield as Britain in one direction and India in the other. I was shown ancient inscriptions and ruins which were evidence of their work.

It is more than likely that it was the famous pearl fisheries which attracted the Phoenicians. To-day, after so many years, these are still the main source of the wealth of Bahrein. I had expected to find

that they were a closely guarded preserve of a few wealthy men, but I found instead that through a liberal edict of the Sheik they were free to all the inhabitants. Any man may "chance his luck with the pearls," so all the population live in hope that one day they will be fortunate and find a pearl of great price. The wealthy merchants employ small armies of divers, but as the season for diving is short they have many months of idleness. Public opinion demands that during all this time the men's wages shall be paid. It is not the will of the Prophet that an employer shall make money through the labours of his people for a season of the year and then cast them aside when the seasons change.

I was fortunate to win the friendship of Sheik Ali Rizah, one of the wealthiest of the pearl merchants. Having been invited to visit him in his office, I went with my brother through the twisting Eastern streets of the waterfront and came at last to a flat-roofed house built somewhat in the European style and very bright with green paint and a green awning. Entering into the cool lower room we were greeted by the Sheik himself, who rose to welcome us. A Persian carpet of deep hue and marvellously intricate design covered the entire floor of the room. All round were polished woods of exquisite sheen. A spotless cleanliness was observed.

The Sheik was actually at work grading a new consignment of pearls when we entered, and we begged him to resume his task. He sat on a low divan and in front of him was a large circular stool of dark shining wood with a small rim at its edge. On this tray lay pearls of all descriptions. I had never realised how many and various are the forms which the pearl can take. The merchant's slender fingers moved amid the piles with bewildering swiftness. The least touch of their smooth lustrous surfaces seemed

sufficient to tell him their quality and worth. Slowly the piles changed, till nearly all of the pearls were graded. This process, the Sheik told us, was merely a preliminary sorting. The work of matching and pricing was far more laborious.

He then amused us greatly by calling upon us in turn to estimate the value of pearls taken at random from the array before him. We were nearly always quite wrong in our guesses, at least at first, but gradually I began to see the principles on which worth was judged. Perfection of shape, depth of lustre, and evenness of texture seemed to me the chief measures of value, but I found that my fingers were not sufficiently sensitive to detect the various degrees of quality. Judging by the eye, however, I soon made excellent progress, and the Sheik was kind enough to tell me that after a few more lessons the pearl seller in the market place would find me a notable antagonist. I suppose that all women have an instinct for pearls which is easily developed, for I know that I thrilled at the sight and touch of so much beauty spread before me—and I am afraid that some tinge of desire to possess entered my heart.

One pearl especially won me. I could imagine dark deeds being committed for such a thing of beauty. It was a perfect sphere of incredible loveliness. In its silky texture I could detect milk whiteness, silver and rose—but these mere words are powerless to conjure the celestial splendour of that sheen.

"How much will you give me for this?" asked Sheik Ali.

"I would give you all I have," I answered, and for the moment I meant it, so completely had the pearl exerted its spell.

"And how much is that?" asked the Sheik, smiling.

"Five hundred pounds of English money."

He shook his head.

"I want five thousand pounds," he said. "I ask five thousand pounds for this one pearl. Look at those delicate tints! Has not a poet said that it is thus that the bodies of angels gleam when they have bathed in a lake of heavenly light?"

Five thousand pounds. . . . It took my breath away.

"Is it really worth so much?" I questioned.

"Like all such objects of great rarity it must vary somewhat in value according to circumstances," said the philosophical merchant, lovingly caressing the perfect thing beneath his hand. "In a famine, let us say, it might purchase only one loaf of bread. But should the wives of two rich men contend for its possession who can say what price it might reach? Five thousand pounds? Well, perhaps my price is high. But I refused four thousand pounds only ten days ago. And I tell you this—if only a second such pearl were to come into my possession—may Allah make me worthy of such fortune!—twelve thousand pounds would be little enough for so lovely a pair. Though having bought the pearls a man might search long years for a woman beautiful enough to wear them. . . . You, of course, would not need them, oh maker of verses, for you make your own pearls of song!"

Nevertheless, before we left him, Sheik Ali Rizah gave both to my brother and to myself a gift of very beautiful pearls. Some years later I was to meet him in London. "I hope you sold them soon," he said. "The market has fallen in these days." I was proud to tell him that no matter how markets rose and fell his pearls should never, if I could help it, leave my possession, and that whenever I looked at them I thought of beautiful Bahrein and the kindness shown me there.

After the good advice of the Sheik I felt emboldened

to risk not a few rupees in purchases from the many vendors of pearls who swarmed round the steps of the palace in the hope that the strangers were rich and might be easily parted from their money. The bargaining was most interesting, and above all I was struck by the dignity of the sellers.

"I sell you a star of the sea. My price is twelve rupees. Only twelve rupees for a treasure of the deep!"

I would look at the pearl without enthusiasm.

"The oyster was lazy who made this dull stone. Nevertheless, I give you six rupees."

"Impossible. I should be shamed before all men if I took so poor a price. Would you have me shamed?"

"Your shame does not concern me, seller of pebbles from the beach! Six rupees."

"Nine. Nine. In the name of Allah, nine!"

"Six."

"Nine."

"Six. . . ." I make as if to turn away.

"One moment, gracious lady. Let us not part without commerce. Commerce is smiled on by Allah. This pearl is not mine. Wait but one instant—I go and ask Rayiah. Perhaps he may consent to your price."

Rayiah is the mythical "owner" always invoked on such occasions in order that "face" may be saved; for the dealer would indeed think himself disgraced if forced to accept half what he first demanded. No one is deceived by this pretext, but honour is satisfied. After a brief colloquy with Rayiah, who is always waiting round the nearest corner, the dealer returns.

"Rayiah was very displeased, yet for your sake I have persuaded him. Six rupees."

But I would not have it thought that I was always successful. When I showed my purchases to Abdullah bin Jabr, secretary to His Highness, who had been

instructed to watch over me, he ran rapidly through my little pile and after learning the prices which I had paid, separated the good bargains from the bad—and I fear that there were too many bad bargains, even though I was thankful that the good outnumbered them.

It was at the hands of Abdullah bin Jabr, most courtly and kindly of cicerones, that we made our tours of the island during the forty days of our stay. Perhaps the most fascinating excursion on which he accompanied us was the visit to the Seven Sweet Fountains that lie beneath the Sea. Incredible as it may seem there are, at a distance of about one mile from the shore, seven fresh water springs on the sea bed, and so powerful is their flow that they make, as it were, small lakes of fresh water on the floor of the sea.

I was told that long years ago there was a drought in the islands, and Allah, seeking to test the faith of the ruler, sent him an angel in a dream who bade him seek fresh water beneath a certain seven stars, each of which was named. The ruler noted the positions of the stars with care, but found to his disgust that they were over the sea. He lacked faith to seek for fresh water in so unlikely a place, but one of his holy men persevered, and to the joy of the islanders the miraculous springs were discovered. This legend is of recent growth, I fancy. Nevertheless, it is true that at night it is by the stars that the pearl divers locate the seven springs. Each one has a special name.

We were taken out to them one evening. It was not the season of pearl fisheries but one or two feluccas were lying at anchor round the sweet springs, the lean, brown fishermen aboard them fishing in leisurely fashion and sometimes breaking into song. When our boat approached Abdullah bin Jabr called out to them that we were guests of the Sheik, on which

they showed us great kindness, asking us to step into their boat while they threw down the pipe for the fresh water. The long rubber pipe was thrown into the sea to a depth, I fancy, of some fifty feet, and through it the fresh water was drawn up. I tasted it and so did my brother. It was just as good as we had been told. There was not the least trace of salinity.

I have since made enquiries of those far more learned than I am, and they tell me that there is no special geological difficulty in explaining the existence of the Seven Fresh Springs that lie beneath the Sea. Water falls inland and collects in an underground lake. Here it is under pressure, so it flows along seeking some outlet. The outlet chances to be under the waters of the bay, which makes the springs appear very remarkable, whereas if the water flowed five miles in the other direction and emerged through the earth little would be thought of it.

There are many stories which I could tell of the Bahrein Islands did my space permit. My adventures on a certain white donkey (a breed peculiar to Bahrein) would make lively reading, for instance; and there is the story of the oysters which I bought, having been given a spell for luck. Only the week before, I was told, a Jewish woman had bought a dozen oysters and had found a pearl worth one thousand pounds. The seller could see a halo of good fortune round my head, the stars were in my favour. Let me purchase some oysters, several dozen, in fact, all unopened, and great fortune would be mine. I succumbed to the lure of sudden wealth, and purchased some not very good oysters at a price somewhat above market level. But there was a catch somewhere. Either the stars were not working as they should—or those oysters had been opened, searched, and cleverly re-sealed. At any rate, I found no pearl.

I learned much of the pearl-fishers' lore. The modern merchant knows all the latest scientific theories yet still clings in his heart to the legends. I was told that it is the first drop of every shower of rain which has the magic power of making a pearl. If the rain falls on the land the serpents all rear up their heads to catch the first drop which becomes their venom. But if the rain falls on the sea it is the oysters who compete for the honour. No matter how deep their bed, the first drop of the shower will reach them, and in the shell of the fortunate mollusc who catches it that drop becomes a pearl.

There is an Arab verse of which I have done my best to make a rough translation. It goes like this:

"The first drop of the precious cooling rain
Caught in the serpent's mouth serves him for bane,
Or falling upon the sea it sinks to the calm deeps,
To be that shining pearl which in the oyster sleeps."

When I commented on this legend to an English friend of mine he told me that it was no more fantastic than many of the beliefs of Elizabethan England—quoting the story of the "barnacle goose" for illustration. In Shakespeare's time, it would seem, it was the normal belief among quite intelligent people that the geese went into the sea in winter and hid in the shells of barnacles—at least, it was something like that. I said that my legend of how the rain made pearls was just as sensible and far more beautiful.

As for the donkey episode, it happened like this. When we were returning to Manana after visiting the schools at Muharraq we found that the tide had receded, leaving us with at least a hundred yards of mud to traverse to get back to our boat. The Arab

women took not the slightest notice of this mud but gathered up their robes and waded through it. I could not help reflecting that ideas of what constitutes modesty vary strangely from land to land. Here were women hiding their faces, but quite unconcernedly exposing their smooth thighs.

For myself I could not follow their example, so Abdullah and my brother obtained a white donkey, on which I rode. The ass picked its way delicately through the morass neatly disposing of its four feet so as to splash as much as possible. No one could have believed that so small a donkey could have sent up such a fountain of splashes. My male escort bore their drenching with remarkable gallantry, but passers-by paused to laugh at our cavalcade. When we were nearly at the boat the donkey caught its hoof in a concealed hole and in its panic nearly succeeded in unseating me. My brother seized me just in time, however, while Abdullah, seeing that the beast seemed to wish to lie down and roll, managed to arrange a compromise.

The donkey knelt, and I managed to keep in the rough saddle until it was persuaded to rise again. Of all the episodes in my travels, this, I think, would have provided the most amusing picture. Unfortunately no camera was available.

His Highness the Sheik Hamad was not very well in health at the time of my visit and retired to his palace of rest. However, he was kind enough to send frequent instructions for my entertainment, and asked for news of what I was doing. Under the guidance of the learned Abdullah bin Jabr I went for a tour of the schools. The two boys' schools in the island of Muharraq were built by His Highness out of his private fortune, and they are under the control of his brother, who takes a keen personal interest in them. There are also two clubs for young men where many

of the chief newspapers of the world may be read. The library is rapidly growing and at the present rate of expansion will soon be a great centre of enlightenment in Bahrein. Somewhat to my embarrassment I was asked to examine the classes in one of the children's schools which I visited and to make a report to the Sheik of how advanced I found his young subjects. I chose the subjects of geography and Arabic grammar and was extremely impressed by the thoroughness of the instructors and the intelligence of the material in their hands. When I discussed education with the Sheik Hamad he told me with justifiable pride that he had just sent eight students to the American University at Beirut to continue their studies, and that he intended to send an increasing number each year, so that very soon a highly-educated body of native administrators would be available.

"Then you shall see what we will do," he said. "I have many, many plans."

When I inquired after the educational status of women I found that there were as yet only small beginnings. An American Mission School for girls was all that existed. During my stay, however, I had the great joy of seeing the first native school for women opened with fifteen students—which number was increased to fifty before I left.

"Al nissa endina yukrum lakin ma yaklubam," said the wife of Sheik Hamad to me one day. That is: "It is permitted to women to read but not to write." Not long afterwards this subject was debated in my presence by an elderly merchant who gave a cunning laugh when I asked him why writing was a prohibited art for women.

"Tell me this, my good lady, tell me this," he said, "why, for what purpose, does a woman desire to write? Is it to conduct better her household affairs?

No, for that can be done quite well by word of mouth. . . . Is it that she may send word to her lord when he is absent from home? A good purpose, that, in truth—but since I have scribes who write to me of all important news for my wife to write herself is unnecessary. . . . No, there is only one reason why a woman should wish the art of letters to be hers: it is that she may write to her lovers! And how big a fool must a man be to pay that she may learn how to do that!"

With that he waved his hand in a lofty manner as if to brush aside completely my pleas for the better education of womenkind. But I was not so easily to be turned aside, and after a moment's thought I re-opened the attack.

"I never cease to wonder at the simplicity of men," I said, "above all in those things which concern women. You, a shrewd merchant, fear that your womenfolk were they taught to write would be better able to conduct illicit love affairs. No doubt you are right, for you starve their minds to such an extent that beyond love there is little else for them to think about. Yes, I dare say you are right. But consider this—what happens now when a woman seeks a lover? Does not she bribe some old crone to deliver messages by word of mouth? And how difficult it is to detect such comings and goings! Even if chance lays them bare, a man has no real proof. But let us suppose that his wife can write. Clearly she will wish to send a message that none but herself will know, so she will write her message. And if you capture the messenger, there is the message in her own hand, and how can she deny it?"

The merchant slapped his thigh and swore that there was good sense in what I said.

"You know, I have a friend, good lady, who loves his wife and yet all the while suspects her. Suspicion

drives him mad, and yet he can find no proof. I will give him your advice, I promise you. His wife shall be taught to write—and then he will catch her!"

I said that it would be mis-use of the gifts of Allah to use the craft of writing only for such low ends. Women should be educated, I said, so that they might take an intelligent interest in the affairs of the world. See how the men of the East delight in speech with the women of the West, I said. Is it their white skins? I do not think so. Is it their beauty? No, for your women are just as beautiful. It is because they can speak freely on all manner of subjects; it is because they have interesting minds. Men, even though they are not aware of it, seek companionship of the mind in their womenfolk. Is it not strange that through enslavement to old custom the men of the East deny themselves what at heart they are seeking?

This, and much more I said, for everywhere that I went, both in private and public, I spread the new doctrine of enlightenment and emancipation for women. I should be happy indeed to think that here and there my words may have borne fruit.

My quarters in the palace were extremely comfortable. At the time of which I write there was neither electric light nor water supply, though these improvements have now been installed. Our water was brought to us each day by an old family retainer of the Sheik Hamad. The drinking water was placed in cunningly scented pitchers so that as you drank it a wonderful perfume of incense stole into your nostrils. Washing water was supplied in plenty in wide bowls.

At first very quiet and respectful, our water-carrier, encouraged I suppose by our kindness, soon became a very great nuisance, for he would talk of nothing but his miseries and his loneliness, and he continually begged us to intercede on his behalf with Abdullah

ben Jabr whom he wished might speak to the Sheik on his behalf and solicit a marriage grant for him. It was, of course, no business of ours, but we were on such good terms with Abdullah, the secretary, that at last I did mention the matter. Abdullah ben Jabr laughed aloud. "You must not pay any attention to old Ben Issa," he said. "He is always like that. Because he has been a faithful servant for many years and knows that he will not be cast out no matter what he does, he is inclined to trade on his position. Not once, but no less than three times, the good Sheik Hamad has made him a marriage gift. Ten sheep to purchase the girl, and a measure of flower to set up house with . . . and it's always the same. After a week or two of married bliss, during which he neglects his duties and is never to be seen in the palace, back he comes to say that the girl plagued him and that he is well rid of her. He is an old rogue. Take no notice of him. And be sure of this—if you do get him a marriage portion, that's the last you'll see of your servant."

Ben Issa swore with many words that while it was true that he had been a somewhat inconstant husband in the past this time it would all be different. The girl was gentle as a pigeon and virtuous as the moon. Let us plead for him that he might secure this great happiness and settle down to end his days in honourable comfort. I learned that the age of the dear old scoundrel was no less than sixty-two.

Whether I was moved by the old man's entreaties or whether I merely felt a feminine curiosity to see what would happen, I do not know. Probably, I think, it was a little of both. Be that as it may, I did intercede for him, and the Sheik, always princely in his generosity towards his servants, made the necessary grant. There was Ben Issa, looking very royal and magnificent in a splendid new abba and a

sword lent him specially for the occasion, ready to be married. The ten sheep were forthcoming, and so were the measures of flour and aish (rice). He was, he informed us, as happy as the faithful in Paradise.

Next day he was missing, and the day after. It was nearly a fortnight before we saw him again. Then he came with our water, and so miserable was his expression that had I not been aware of his record, my heart would have been wrung with pity.

"Another failure, Ben Issa? Truly the Prophet does not smile upon your unions!"

"Indeed no, Khatoon madam, I am very wretched. As for the pigeon of my dreams, I was deceived in her. The meat that she gave me was salt so that my stomach rebelled against it; and the bread that she baked was sodden. Nor was she obedient to my wishes. I have sent her back to her parents as she deserved."

"And the sheep and the flour, Ben Issa? Are these good gifts of the Sheik your master wasted once more? What will he say to this?"

"As for the sheep, madam, they are in the possession of the girl's father, who will not return even one of them as compensation to me. And the flour is consumed. But I beg you to tell my master how wretched I am. Perhaps then his heart will be softened towards me and he will from out of his abundance grant me ten more sheep. There is a girl in a street not far from the palace who is good as an angel and slender as a palm. Perhaps only eight sheep might purchase her. . . ."

I often wonder whether Ben Issa got his eight sheep and what happened to his fifth experiment in matrimony. At any rate I was no longer inclined to plead his cause, especially as I had to endure the merry laughter of Abdullah ben Jabr, who was delighted that things had turned out exactly as he prophesied.

Ben Issa doubtless had virtues, though these I did not stay in Bahrein long enough to discover. With his faults, however, I had ample time to become fully acquainted. Not least among these was an incorrigible laziness. Once when I was walking along a corridor of the palace with the good Abdullah we came upon him fast asleep in a corner at a time when he should have been attending to his duties. Now I had a fox fur which had always intrigued the secretary, who had many times remarked how life-like it appeared. He now asked me if he might borrow it, and I willingly assented. Creeping up to the sleeping Ben Issa, he placed the fox very cleverly so that it appeared about to spring. We then retired a short distance and made a loud noise. The effect on Ben Issa was electric. Waking suddenly and seeing the strange animal about to devour him he howled like a wolf and fled as fast as his feet would carry him, crying out that he was bewitched. Nor did he stop till he was clear of the palace.

I tell this story to show that humour is much the same all the world over. It also indicates the happy care-free spirit which was characteristic of Bahrein.

All times of happiness draw to an end. For nearly six weeks my brother and I had been showered with delightful hospitalities, and now came the moment of farewell.

"Sheik Hamad asks me to tell you that a feast is planned in your honour," said Abdullah ben Jabr. "Will you let me know where you would like it—here in your apartment or on an upper floor?"

I said that I thought that it would be best upstairs, and Abdullah agreed with me. Soon I saw a small procession of servants, the lazy Ben Issa, I was glad to note, among them, carrying rich carpets up from the ground floor. I was a little ashamed that I had

given so much trouble, and I apologised to the secretary, saying that I had not realised it was to be so elaborate an affair. At last I was bidden to the banquet and I found to my surprise that it was on the terraced roof. "How wise you were to choose the terrace," said Sheik Hamad greeting me. "It is a perfect night and there is fortunately a cooling wind. Now at the end of your stay with us you shall see our island at its loveliest."

Indeed he spoke the truth. Bright lamps placed at each corner of the terrace roof threw beams of light which warred with the moonlight, a strange crossing of brilliant yet impalpable swords. The light air seemed to carry the loveliness of the moon upon it, so that as each slow, cool breath touched our faces we seemed to breathe the very light of the moon.

There was food and drink in exquisite abundance, but there was also good fellowship and good talk in plenty, for in that brilliant dusk hearts and minds flowered into delicate intimacies of thought and feeling.

I had composed as my share of the evening a valedictory poem which I recited, to the accompaniment of the gentle sounds of wind and sea. Even as I spoke I could not help feeling that no poem is as lovely as the voice of nature. Wind and running water say things which the poet seeks in vain to utter.

When I had ended my recital, which Sheik Hamad was kind enough to praise, water was offered to me. It was beautiful water, and I asked from whence it came.

"It is from a famous well, Bir Hennene," the Sheik said. (Bir is the Arabic for well and Hennene means sweet.)

Now it chances that my first name is Hennene,

so I said laughingly, "That means that the well is mine!"

"Indeed," said the Sheik, "I would willingly give you the well and all the land round it if you would come and dwell among us and make your poems."

Truly a kingly compliment, spoken with grace.

The moment of leaving came. The steamer which was to take us to Iraq lay heaving in the offing. Our baggage was in the launch. It included several carpets of great beauty, a present at farewell from the Sheik. Our friends were mustered at the quayside to wave good-bye. An Arab sailor cast off the moorings; the launch moved. With tears in my eyes I watched the strip of blue water widen which cut me off from the happiness I had known on the gracious Islands of Bahrein.

CHAPTER XX

INDIA: THE PROBLEM OF CASTE

MANY of those who have written concerning India, have stressed the difficulties of the task. That is a sound move at the start of any undertaking. The Arab physician, I have often heard it said, invariably pronounces that the state of the patient is beyond human skill. This has the obvious advantage that if a cure should now be effected the repute of the doctor is immeasurably enhanced, while if death follows no blame can rightly be attached to him. This policy, doubtless known in Harley Street (I have heard of a world-famous surgeon referred to as "Old Touch and Go"), is equally suited to writers. Point out that you are attempting the impossible and who shall berate you for failure. Let it be understood, then, that in writing of India I am attempting the impossible.

India is the size of Europe, excluding Russia. The population numbers at least 352 millions, which figure may be an under-estimation by as much as one half per cent.

The variety of race and creed is astonishing. It would be easy to write that there is no such entity as "India"—or better that there are many such entities, some adjacent, most overlappng. But my own impression, based on travels which I recognise clearly to have been very limited in proportion to the vast area before me, is that the disunity of India has been exaggerated. I do not mean that any facts have been incorrectly stated. What I am trying to say is that the biggest fact of all has been rather overlooked.

It is this: that India is a land of villages, that the

soil, "the good earth," is the basic fact in the life of the great majority of Indians. This alliance to the earth gives a unity which though it is obscured by all manner of detail, like a strong pillar to which the fantastic adornments of the baroque have been applied, is nevertheless of supreme importance.

The interests of all peasants are, in the last analysis, identical. The small farmer has first to secure a year's food supply for himself and the family. That is existence. Happiness depends on his producing a small surplus and exchanging it for luxuries which give him pleasure. That is the demand of India, irrespective of creed or tongue. Security of tenure, good crops, and a small surplus for happiness.

This is perhaps an over-simplification, but I have found it useful to keep the formula in mind. It is often said that Religion is the chief force behind the workings of the Indian mind. This is true, but it must not be forgotten that for the ordinary villagers Religion is not an end in itself but a means of achieving security. Interference with his religious practices may lead an Englishman to revolt, but he does not believe that because he has been prevented from performing certain ceremonies he will be exposed to personal disasters from natural forces. He probably does not even think that his future state after this life is imperilled. It is that he means to do just what he thinks right, and resents pressure to act differently as an affront to his dignity. Now, to the Indians any disturbance to his ritual strikes with threefold force. He thinks that both his crops and his person are threatened with disease; that he may be exposed to eternities of misery after death; and he also feels, in his poverty, that the meticulous observance of his faith is his one hold on that dignity without which life is hardly possible to the sentient being.

Another fact to be borne in mind is the antiquity

of custom. Conqueror after conqueror has come and gone, for few lands have been subdued so many times, but the daily life of the people has altered very little. There is ample evidence that three thousand years ago there was civilisation over much of India. There was sculpture, there were poems, there were laws to govern both family life and commerce, there were great rulers, there was magnificence; and all this on a scale comparable with pre-Renaissance Europe, though such comparisons admittedly call for caution.

In these early times there arose a system of social relationship which still survives. It is known as the Caste system, and no feature of Indian life has been so grotesquely misrepresented to Europeans. It is often spoken of as though it were merely a brutal means of keeping the under-dog down, whereas it aimed at stabilising Society, and was a guarantee of Social equality within certain limits. Castes originally conformed to occupations, and were divided into groups known as communities. Riches did not enter into this classification, and two members of the same community, though one were affluent and the other in abject poverty, were equals. In religious observance they would stand side by side; if a ruler gave a banquet they might be seated together; on a feast day they would talk and drink together.

The Caste system was bound to the Hindu religion in a manner faintly similar to the link between Guilds and Church in Catholic Europe at the best period, but one must imagine the whole Society divided into huge Guilds, membership of which was by inheritance alone. Like every other human system of this kind Caste has resulted in much injustice, for it has failed to develop with changing conditions; but its purpose, which on the balance over the centuries it has achieved, was to preserve Social security and prevent the deterioration of the populace through wrong marriages.

Under this system the Indians lived in fair contentment until the coming of Europeans brought corruption. This, at first sight, is hard for the Western mind to credit. He pictures a corrupt Hinduism shown up by the high moral standard of the invading West. This is untrue for two reasons. In the first place, though it might be argued that the highest moral levels of Europe were in some ways superior to those of India, it was not her highest levels that Europe usually exported. Further, even when Europeans of high principles came to India their lack of understanding caused them to do more harm than some of the scoundrels among their countrymen did; for the good men tried to tamper with the Social scheme of things, while scoundrels merely grabbed what they could lay hands on—an unpleasant process enough, but one which inflicted less permanent harm.

The position to-day, as stated by the best Indian thought, is this: even allowing that the West has brought material benefit to India, the affront to Eastern dignity which the presence of the alien in all positions of authority entails, is a corrupting influence which outweighs any advantages. There is a further point: by allying the commerce and finance of India in the system of the West, the invaders have inflicted all the slump and boom tendencies of their own economics upon a land which was otherwise free from such fluctuations. And even the praiseworthy efforts of the British Raj to dam great waters and improve health services have had an ill-effect, for population has increased at a dangerous rate. It might almost be said that a curse is laid on those who seek to help India that their most righteous actions shall do the most harm.

CHAPTER XXI

THE EDUCATION OF INDIA

FATE

On two days flight in vain:
That day for death decreed,
Though like the wind thy speed,
Yet thou art slain.

Though earth and stars unite
Against thee in the fight,
Upon another day
Not God himself can slay.

No good service will be done to India by minimising the extent of her problems. First and foremost there is that of illiteracy. This is a great danger to any State because it is impossible to administer justice effectively to an illiterate people. No matter how honestly the law is framed and administered, there can be no equality between the man who can seize the nature of a document at a glance and one to whom all written characters savour of incomprehensible magic. The essential of law is that it deals with the written word. Oral evidence is frequently reviewed in written form, and even in simple cases the array of documents is often bewildering to an educated person, let alone one who can neither write nor read. Even when the illiterate receives justice he will not believe, if the verdict has gone against him, that the decision of the court is impartial, and neither will his fellows. People, and they are many, who say that it is waste of time to educate the masses, or alternatively that it is dangerous, fail to see that widespread ignorance may be a far greater source of waste and danger.

For all the errors of judgment with which it may be charged, Christianity in India can claim with confidence that it has always stood for education. Protestantism from its very earliest beginnings has always laid stress upon the need for every man to be able to read and ponder for himself, and always in India the establishment of a church meant the opening of a school. In stressing the close connection between Protestantism and education I intend no aspersion of the Roman Catholic missions, who have always given admirable instruction to their converts, but it can hardly be denied that whereas the Protestant mind is able to value knowledge for itself alone, the priest of Rome is bound to consider it as a means to an end. This makes it more difficult for the Roman Catholic organisations to co-operate with the State in matters of education, for the State must spread knowledge divorced as far as possible from doctrinal implications, unless it is to be charged with gross partisanship, while the Church of Rome can give no sanction to knowledge isolated from the fundamentals of its creed.

It is, of course, precisely this fear on the part of the enlightened Indian that the education which is given by the State is tainted by all manner of alien and harmful philosophies which tends to make him suddenly intransigent when his help is required. Another type of Indian who gives only lip service to the educational cause is the educated professional, or semi-professional, sort who see in their superior knowledge a means of enriching themselves at the expense of their illiterate brethren. Then there is the Rajah, let us say, who is not opposed to education provided that it is not allowed too far out of his control, and who is shrewd enough to wonder whether it may not in the end prove a good investment by increasing the productivity of his State; but who

Buddhist Temple Delhi

Buddhist Temple Delhi

The Monkey Temple

Hindu Temple near Benares

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is deterred by the problem of very considerable expense without prospect of immediate return, and who has behind him the long tradition of India that time is of little consequence, and that the good forces of the cosmos must ultimately prevail no matter how slowly they move in the affairs of men. Add to all these tendencies the welter of conflicting interests, both religious and commercial, which have a bearing upon the question of education, and it will be seen that to describe the problem as thorny is a very mild understatement of the facts.

It is no part of my intentions in this book to give a detailed account of the various grades of education to be found in India. Facts down to the last piece of chalk or indiarubber are available in Government publications, and the more human aspects have been dealt with in many excellent volumes. My task is to sketch as far as I can those broad outlines which wealth of detail may have blurred, and to give a glance to the future. I expect to be misunderstood by fanatics on all sides, but I am addressing myself to moderate decent liberal opinion wherever it may be found.

Between three and three and a half million people in India (that is roughly one per cent. of the entire population) have some knowledge of reading and writing. About one-third of this number of grown-ups are in actual fact rather below the standard reached by the average city-dwelling European child at ten years of age, and only one tenth are above the English fourth form standard. These percentages, of course, have nothing to do with intelligence; they are a measure of knowledge of fact, and latent brain-power is not considered. There is some reason to think that given the same advantages the average Indian is superior to the corresponding European in some branches of learning, especially higher mathematics.

The above figures may be contested. It is naturally a matter of great difficulty to estimate levels of knowledge when statistics are lacking. All that I can say is that I have consulted seven or eight people, Indians and Europeans among them, all of whom had profound knowledge of their own areas. Their answers, often hesitant, and sometimes coloured unconsciously by hopes or fears, I have combined into a cautious generalisation, my only wish being to remain scrupulously fair.

Assuming then that I am within measureable distance of the facts, what conclusions are to be drawn? The first is, I think, that the Government of India has never seriously pursued any well-defined objective in education. Local and individual effort, accompanied by piecemeal assistance from the authorities has produced some centres of light in a surrounding darkness which is still as thick as ever. The official mind must first come to a realisation of the fact that the education of India is a national problem to be tackled as a whole. I can think of a hundred good reasons why this is impossible, but against them I place the certain knowledge that it has got to be done or the case is hopeless. Difficulties must not be overlooked, but they must not be allowed to cramp the initial plan.

That is the first step. The second is to make a survey, a brief and not too-detailed summing up, of the task ahead. I dare say that most of the necessary data are already accessible, and that the Government files would yield a mass of well-arranged fact only waiting to be shaped to a spearhead for the attack on ignorance. The results of the survey would show, I believe that two-thirds of the population of India are easily reached, and highly educable. The next step is to draw up a scheme of instruction suited to their needs.

FAKIRS

NATIVE CRAFTSMEN (MYSORE)

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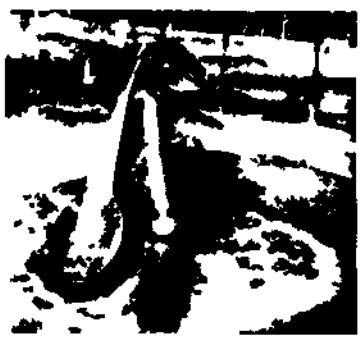

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (DELHI

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Indians whom I have met have complained bitterly of the quality of the textbooks which come out from England—especially those intended for the young. They are the cruder products of "philistine" Victorianism, shoddy in colour, in paper, and worst of all in thought. The superiority of the white race is implied in the whole tone of these books, and they contain much which the educated Indian must inevitably resent. Only in the least progressive schools of England are their counterparts to be found.

No Indian has any grudge against Nelson, and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," both in its heroism and in its incompetence, has the same lessons for the youth of India as for those of Britain; but there are great heroes and great charges in Indian history which are surely more suitable material for the schools of that country. This point, which has wide implications, need not be pressed further. It is clear that any scheme of education in which the best Indian opinion is to be asked to co-operate must be thoroughly Indian in character, though not narrowly or pedantically so. That it must be to a large extent in the English language my own investigations amply proved. My groundwork of Arabic and allied tongues gave me some insight into the dialect difficulties of India, and they appalled me. No exhaustive analysis of the many modes of speech has yet been made, but the materials collected show some three hundred distinct tongues, while finer shades of difference are almost innumerable. English, in amusingly corrupted forms, is already a *lingua franca* throughout the whole peninsula, and with the evolution of "Basic English," a simple and beautiful version of the language based on a vocabulary of less than one thousand words, there can be no question that it is the best medium for general instruction in India. This does not mean that the Indian languages are to be neglected.

Writing as a woman of the East I am urgent that all the culture sources of India shall be preserved. My upholding of English as a general auxiliary language is based upon a recognition of facts, and the knowledge that a properly systematised common speech and writing of a sort adapted to modern commercial needs will be an immense benefit to the country.

What is needed then is a set of text-books which give the necessary instruction in English on the very simplest lines. The objection at once arises that a large number of different editions will be necessary to meet the requirements of the sections of population who have different languages. But this is not so. Modern teaching of language relies more and more on avoiding laborious translations, and plunges the student into an examination of passages in the required language so arranged that their sense dawns upon the reader with as little translator's aid as possible. It is surprising to what extent this method may be employed with the aid of skilfully chosen pictures, and I believe that a standard English course for the whole of India could be designed on these lines.

Naturally the greatest care would have to be taken to make the course objective, and to include only those topics which arouse no antagonisms, but this is only a matter of care and commonsense. "The cat sat on the mat" is a sentence without religious implications—at least so far as I know, though in Egypt it might recall ancient mythologies. "The farmer beats the cow," on the other hand, would arouse resentment among Hindus. I do not imagine, knowing to what extent religious conviction can make even the most well-meaning people violently unreasonable, that any course can be devised in which some fanatics here and there will not see covert propaganda or veiled insult; but that kind of difficulty must be faced when it arises, and faced determinedly without

exaggerated timidity. Commonsense will prevail, I think, given time and courteous impartiality on the part of educational authority.

There will be some Christians who will view with disfavour what they will term the materialist tendency of instruction such as I have suggested. But I write as a Christian woman who believes in Christianity so fervently that I do not wish to see the departmental dice loaded in its favour. All I ask for my faith is a clear field, with neither hindrance nor favour. Christianity must triumph on its own merits or not at all. Christians at home do not realise the great disservice which has been done to their cause in India by those who have sought to further it by extraneous activity. The large numbers of "conversions" which were made in times of food shortage when such supplies as there were tended to be administered through Church hands, were no source of strength to Christianity. Heaven knows I mean no offence to the thousands of sincere workers who toiled to relieve whatever suffering came their way, and knew that the mercy of Christ had no thought of creed. But it was in fact very widely believed among the masses that the convert had first claim on supplies, and many of the changes of faith which were registered implied not so much faith in Jesus as the belief that the first law of life is to get a square meal. The term "famine Christian," which was applied to such converts, is now largely forgotten, but the feeling of resentment remains.

At this very moment mass conversions are taking place for another reason. The various organisations which aim at making vocal the claims of the Untouchables have adopted the policy of urging their members to become "converted," hoping by this means to wring substantial concessions from the Hindu hierarchy, who are alarmed at the huge scale of the

desertions, as might well be expected. Now the more farseeing members of the Christian communites are by no means blind to the dangers of this mass movement. While they welcome the Untouchables with open arms as their brothers in Christ, they cannot but see that the Church is being made a tool for political purposes by men who have no real sympathy with either its doctrines or its power. For the leaders of this revolt of the Untouchables are often of the militant materialist type, some of them sincere, others self-seekers, but all the natural foes of religion. The situation is difficult, and what will be the outcome none can well forecast.

Education must be kept as clear as possible from political or religious bias. The accomplishments most needed by the average villager are the ability to read an official announcement and to write a simple letter, while knowledge of how to operate the arabic numeral processes for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division would be helpful. These processes are at present carried out by a variety of manual devices ranging from notches on a stick and stones kept in a pot to arrangements resembling the Roman abacus, methods which serve very well. Not much chance exists, I fancy, of taking arithmetical advantages of the average villager in calculations of a type with which he is familiar. I found one man who grasped the idea of percentages immediately, while another reasoned out the most awkward division of a piece of property by means of little squares and oblongs scratched in the dust. It is only right to say in this case that his calculations did not satisfy the father of his daughter's husband, who broke an earthenware pot over the head of the unfortunate mathematician; but the local court subsequently confirmed the result which was derived from the cabbalistic symbols in the dust, and fined the aggressor smartly.

Reading and writing remain the chief needs of the people. For want of these no amount of natural cunning can be a proper substitute. I think that they can be taught along the lines I have indicated with comparatively little danger of bias of either a political or religious kind; and while I am aware that there are devotees of various faiths so suspicious that they would see in the multiplication table some hidden denial of the principles of their creeds, I feel that the obvious advantages of instruction in such practices as the "three R's" must be so obvious as to overthrow all opposition in the end.

CHAPTER XXII

THE STATE OF PATIALA

PATIALA, the premier Indian State of the Punjab, is essentially a military State in character, and is the largest and most important of the Sikh territories belonging to the group known as the Phulkian States. The family of the ruling prince belong to the Sidhu Jat clan, and has played an important part in the consolidation of British rule in India.

The State of Patiala derives its name from its capital, which was founded by Baba Ala Singh, the first independent ruler, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the earliest ancestors of the House of Patiala being descendants of the Royal Rajput family of Jaisalmer, who left their desert homes about the time of Rai Pthora, the last Hindu king of Delhi, and established themselves in the country round Hisaar, Sirsa and Bhatner. The ancestors of the present rulers of Patiala fought with the British troops in the Sikh, Afghan and Gurkha wars, displaying conspicuous bravery, and their military prowess have always been of great vlaue to the British Government.

The Patiala family has been established as a ruling power south of the Sutlej since 1753, when the present capital was founded. Often the State was under the influence of a woman of courage, wisdom and activity, who fought at the head of their troops. One of these Ranis in a battle against the Maharattas turned the fortune of the day at a critical moment in the battle by her display of personal valour, for drawing her sword she addressed her soldiers

thus: "I have resolved not to retreat. It would be a shame for the Sikh nation if at this moment they left a woman, the sister of their sovereign, to be slain by their enemies."

The British Government, by throwing its mantle over these States in 1809 saved them from the rapacity of Ranjit Singh, who was sweeping all before him, and they have since proved their gratitude to their suzerain, markedly in the dark days of the great military revolt of 1857.

Ala Singh, the founder of Patiala, was altogether a remarkable man, and the rapid rise of the State in the first stages of its history is a striking tribute to his genius as a ruler. In 1749 Ala Singh built the fortress of Dhodan (Bhawanigarh) and a few years later founded the capital. He died in the following year, but he had already laid the foundation of a rule based not on plunder and loot, as was frequently the case in those days, but on the love and respect of his subjects, whose descendants still cherish his memory, and always refer to him by the half-reverent, half-loving title of "Baba."

Ala Singh was succeeded by his grandson, Amar Singh, who proved to be a capable ruler and a brilliant soldier. By several territorial acquisitions he succeeded in making Patiala the most powerful State between the Jumna and Sutlej. Friendly political relations with the British Government commenced in the year 1804, when Lord Lake received assurance of friendship from Maharaja Sahib Singh, son of Amar, as the British passed through Patiala in pursuit of Jaswant Rao Holkar, who had retreated into the Punjab. Lord Lake signed a document in which he assured Sahib Singh that "whereas you have declared yourself to be a staunch friend of the Kingdom, therefore the country at present in your possession shall continue to remain as it is and no tribute shall ever be demanded."

Maharaja Sahib Singh died in 1813, and was succeeded by Maharaja Karam Singh, who greatly distinguished himself by whole-hearted service to Britain in several expeditions. In recognition of his valour the British Government awarded him 16 perganas in the Simla Hills.

During the great Mutiny of 1857-8 no Prince in India showed greater loyalty or rendered more conspicuous service to the British Government than the Maharaja of Patiala. From the commencement of the Mutiny to the end of the year 1857 Patiala supported the British with guns, cavalry, infantry and officers. Once again the splendid services of the Maharaja were gratefully acknowledged by the British Government, who made a grant to him of the rich pergana of Narnaul (forming part of the forfeited State of the Nawab of Jhajjar), on condition of political and military support in times of general danger and disturbance. He was also given all the rights of the paramount power over the Bahadur Sirdars.

Maharaja Mohindra Singh, whose name ranks high in the history of the States, did not live long, and died when he was only twenty-six, but his administration was marked by several events of considerable importance to his territory.

In 1871 His Highness gave valuable aid to the British Government in suppressing the Kuka rising, and then saying that he wished his people to be as great in the arts of peace as in those of war, gave 70,000 rupees to the University College at Lahore, and established the Mohindra College in his own capital. He was thus one of the pioneers of education in Indian States and even in India itself, for the college was established at a time when college education was almost unknown in the country. His salute was raised from 15 to 17 guns in 1864, and the insignia of a Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Star of India was

conferred on him in 1871. Two years later during the great famine he gave with unlimited generosity for the relief of sufferers.

King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales) paid a visit to the Maharaja at Rajputana in 1875, and congratulated him on the progress on his State; but Maharaja Mohindra Singh died in 1878, leaving as his heir Rajindra Singh, who was only four years of age. There was, however, no dispute concerning succession, and towards the end of that year the Council of Regency felt that conditions were so stable that they could offer to place the whole resources of the State at the disposal of the British Government in the event of the outbreak of war on the North-West frontier. This generous offer was given a practical form by their promise to maintain for service side by side with British troops specially trained bodies of cavalry and infantry. Patiala troops served in the China War, and also in the various campaigns in South Africa, for which the State presented a large number of trained remounts for the use of British cavalry.

During Maharaja Rajindra Singh's time progress continued, and a line of railway 108 miles in length was constructed by the State between Rajputana and Bhatinda. His Highness was created a Knight Grand Commander of the most Exalted Order of the Star of India in 1893. Following the traditions of his House he gave generously to education, principally to Khalsa College, Amritsar, and also to the Punjab University, and the Imperial Institute in London.

Maharaja Rajindra Singh died in 1900, and was succeeded by his son, the present Ruler.

"Your Highness has ever been a True and Devoted Friend of the British Crown. . . . To a loyal and capable statesman such as Your Highness the crisis of the Great War came not as a trial, but as an opportunity." In these words, after describing the splendid

efforts of His Highness towards winning the war, the Prince of Wales (now the Duke of Windsor) thanked the Maharaja for his aid in time of stress.

"Your Highness and your State have in no respect fallen short of your glorious traditions of Loyalty and Service," the Prince continued. "Few States can show such a record. It is indeed a fortunate chance that in this crisis the Punjab had Your Highness as its Premier Prince and that the Sikhs had you for their most prominent leader. I feel proud that my House possesses such a true and devoted friend, and I am happy to be able in person to-night to offer my thanks and congratulations for this record of unwearied service."

These words were well deserved. The total expenditure on the States' war service, including contributions to the various loans, amounted to one and one third crores of rupees.

The Maharaja was a respected figure at the Sessions of the War Conferences and many of the War Cabinets. He had the honour of being invested by King George with the insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire. In England he made friends everywhere. A London newspaper, describing a function he attended, wrote of the Maharaja as the most dignified figure there. "Tall and handsome with fine, expressive features and luminous eyes, he suggested the exquisite flower of Oriental aristocracy. His bearing is distinguished, his manners are gracious and cordial."

In commemoration of the Silver Wedding of King George and Queen Mary, the Maharaja made a donation of £7,000 to be utilised for any purpose Their Majesties might select. The King Emperor wrote to the Maharaja thanking him for the generous gift, "a further mark of dutiful loyalty to our Throne and person that I value highly." Letter cases were

presented to 6,000 wounded soldiers in London in memory of the occasion.

As a Ruler His Highness has been particularly notable for the attention he has devoted to what are sometimes known as "nation-building activities." He has improved and extended the system of a primary and collegiate education throughout the State and has instituted numerous scholarships tenable for study in British India and in Europe. He has greatly extended the roads and the railway system, and has watched over industrial, commercial and agricultural development. As a result of his policy the gross revenue has risen from its original figures of seventy-eight lakhs of rupees to something over one hundred and fifty lakhs.

The State is divided into three portions, of which the most extensive is situated in the plains south of the Sutlej River, the second is a hill country, stretching as far as Simla and beyond as far as Kufri, while the third is the isolated Pergana of Narnaul, lying 180 miles distant from the capital and bordering on the Shekhawati and Irawati districts of Jaipur and the States of Alwar and Loheru. The total area is 4,492 square miles, with a population of 1,600,000, and the revenue from all sources amounts to fifteen million rupees.

Though as a military State, Patiala devotes special attention towards the organisation and equipment of an efficient army, His Highness has shown himself liberal in outlook, and his chief thought has always been for the prosperity of the common man. His gift of statesmanship was demonstrated during the war years, and is witnessed to by the excellent internal administration of the State, but it has been revealed to its fullest in the prominent part he has taken in guiding the destinies of the Chamber of Princes. In conjunction with his friends, The Maharaja of Bikaner

and Jam Sahib Ranjitsinghji, the Maharaja of Patiala was among those primarily responsible for urging upon the British Government the establishment of this institution. For many years he was a member of the Standing Committee, and on the retirement of the Maharaja of Bikaner from the position of Chancellor of the Chamber, was unanimously chosen by his brother princes to assume that high office. He has discharged its difficult and delicate duties with great wisdom and moderation, and during the time when the Indian States Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Harcourt Butler, was engaged in its important investigations, was well fitted to be the spokesman for the Princes. Throughout this period his many public pronouncements, delivered both in England and in India, clearly reveal the constructive character of his thoughts, as well as his intimate realisation of the fact that no Indian State to-day can live for itself alone, but must have an eye to the larger interests both of India as a whole and of the British Empire. His term of office as Chancellor has been memorable in more than one way. It established the States as an essential factor in the development of the Empire, and the historic resolution passed by the Indian Princes' Chamber in 1929 reaffirming their allegiance to His Majesty the King Emperor will remain as a landmark in the annals of the States.

Soon after our arrival in Patiala I was fortunate enough to be granted an interview with His Highness the Maharaja Dhiraj, the ruler of Patiala State. His Highness insisted that I should be his guest, and signed an order that we should be shown everything we wished to see. Since our arrival happened to coincide with the date of His Highness's birthday, I was invited to attend the Durbar ceremony that was held at Fort Palace (Kila Mubarak).

It was a brilliant occasion. His Highness appeared

in a procession, with six A.D.C.s walking before him in their blue military uniforms and with swords unsheathed. Over His Highness's head a costly white umbrella was spread, and many guards and chodbars were in attendance. When His Highness approached the gate the military band played the Patiala National anthem and guns boomed a salute. Greetings were then offered by high officials of the State.

When he entered the Durbar Hall all the assembly stood up out of respect. His Highness ascended the throne and sat down on the Gady (Masnad) with his feet crossed. The native assembly then sat down on carpets. All were bare-footed, but wore beautiful multi-coloured costumes and flaming orange turbans.

Seated next to the Maharaja was His Highness the Yuvraj, or Crown Prince. Next came the Prime Minister, the A.D.C.s and other State officials according to their rank. The ceremonial was impressive. First came the priests, with their sacred offerings, pronouncing many blessings and beseeching the Gods to grant their monarch long life. Then the ministers and officials gave their presents, or "Nazars," to their ruler, mostly offering golden Indian coins or English sovereigns. His Highness took the presents, placed them in front of him, and then raised his hand on to his forehead as a sign of acceptance. At the same time the chobdars stood up and shouted out "Gareeb Parwar Shri Hozoor Maharaja salamat," which means, "God protect the Maharaja who is the protector of the poor." Then the women singers clad in their most gorgeous costumes sang in turn their finest songs, music which had all the fine-drawn beauty of the Orient in its exquisite cadences. It was an unforgettable scene.

Now the rest of the people began to present their offerings, mostly silver rupees placed on red silk handkerchiefs. Some gave bales of wool or lengths of

silken stuffs of splendid Indian manufacture; and when all, down to the poorest, had paid tribute came the State poets to greet His Highness with odes in celebration of his birthday. As a woman and a stranger I was first, and the people greeted me heartily when I stood up to recite my Arabic poem. I was followed by poets of all the many communities of India, who recited their poems in Urdu and Gurmukhi.

Then His Highness got down from the dais and walked towards the gate from where the procession started. There were drawn up the decorated elephants. The finest beast had necklaces and paintings on forehead and trunk, and carried rich silver anklets. His Highness was to take the third elephant, and the others were for the Yuvraj, the second son, and the high officials.

When His Highness reached the steps the elephant knelt before him and he mounted its back by means of a silver ladder to sit on the front seat of the Handas, which was beautifully decorated. From there he answered the salute of the people. Meanwhile the Yuvraj and the other notables had mounted and the procession started from the fort towards the Moti Bagh Palace. The A.D.C.s again led the process, now riding on horseback with drawn swords. The cavalry, bearing the State's banners and many national emblems, followed in flashing style. His Highness wore a beautifully-coloured native suit and orange-coloured turban, decorated with precious jewels. There was precious plumage on his turban which flashed most beautifully in the sun. Costly pearl necklaces were wound about his neck, and rings worth a whole province were upon his fingers.

The elephants stalked majestically one after the other, followed by the royal carriage, made all of silver and gold and driven by six bedizened horses. His Highness had come in this carriage, and now there

was no one inside it. The State battalions, the men of the military band in violet suits and turbans, chobdars and bodyguards, constables and police officers in full military array were also in the procession, which was followed by thousands of people, and guns kept on booming till His Highness arrived at the palace. There he was greeted by another enthusiastic crowd, all shouting to their Gods to ask long life for their ruler and prosperity for the State.

The illumination of both the palaces commenced at six in the evening, and soon transformed the capital into a fairyland. It was a veritable maze of lights, brilliant and beautiful in the violet dusk. Feasting continued far into the night.

After two days came the third and most important feast. This was to celebrate the coronation day, know as "The Time of Assumption of Power." I was invited to a dinner and musical party organised by the members of the Gymkhana where the Yuvraj represented his father, since His Highness had been called away to lay the foundation stone of a Sikh temple in another city. The Yuvraj made a very fine figure surrounded by three of his father's ministers, one of whom, the minister of Law and Justice, stood up and delivered an eloquent speech, addressing the Crown Prince as future ruler and praising him as a follower in his father's footsteps. Then the Yuvraj stood up and said: "Let us drink a toast to His Majesty the King Emperor," which the hundred guests honoured with acclamation. Next the Minister of Justice said: "Let us drink to His Highness Maharaja Dhiraj our Ruler." Lastly another toast was drunk for the Crown Prince, and the guests cheered the Yuvraj heartily. The Minister of Agriculture, Dewan Jermanidas, asked me to recite the Arabic verses I had composed for the occasion.

After dinner we went to the great salon where many

dancing girls sang in the presence of His Highness, who called upon us all to make merry, addressing the guests and members of the club as "My brothers."

Thus all my first four days in Patiala were days of feasts and ceremonies, merry-making and joy. I prayed God, the Almighty, to keep this State always in prosperity and progress under the reign of His Highness, who is so loved by his people.

I visited the Mohindra College accompanied by Captain Hamid, one of the A.D.C.s, whom His Highness had asked to show me round. The college, as I have related, owes its origin to the munificence of Maharaja Mohindra Singh, whose name it bears. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Northbrook, in March, 1875, the building having cost over five lakhs of rupees. I was impressed to learn that the college is now affiliated to the Punjab University, which grants degrees up to B.A. Honours. Although in 1909 the number of students was only 95, by 1932 it had risen to 560, and to over 600 in 1933. At the time of my visit 339 students were State subjects and 221 from other parts of the land. Education both in Science and the Arts is free, Mohindra being the first College in the East to give free education to every pupil without regard to religion or caste.

The college is maintained at a total annual cost of about seventy thousand rupees, and the Science Department was recently added at a cost of over a lakh of rupees. Including the Principal, the total number of professors is sixteen, and in addition there are two Science demonstrators. The college has a hostel which can accommodate nearly 130 students. On account of the large increase in the number of students there has been of late so much pressure on the available accommodation that for the last four years it has been found necessary to rent an adjacent building for a branch hostel. This is not altogether satisfactory,

and it has been decided to add an upper wing to the hostel at an early date.

The college maintains a library of 5,400 books, including all the great classics and many scientific treatises in the various European languages. So rapidly is the library growing that a chosen official has been sent to Lahore to train as skilled librarian.

But the college has interests beyond the purely academic. The games section has been very much in the picture, and teams are sent to the University Tournament every year. Everything possible is done to encourage physical fitness, and a medical inspection of students takes place annually.

Mohindra is the only college in Patiala State, but there are many High Schools for both sexes. Patiala was the first Indian State to establish an Arts College at a time when such an educational experiment was regarded in the Indian States as a daring novelty. To-day it is still the one State where not only primary and secondary, but even college education is given free of cost.

Interested to see what was being done for women, I visited the Victoria Girls' School, accompanied by the Minister for Education. I was very pleased with the kindergarten classes, and throughout the school the girls were eager and the teachers efficient in their work. There were 600 pupils, most of them Hindus. I saw very few Sikhs and fewer still Muslims, because these keep Purdah, which cuts them off from progress completely.

In all the schools they teach the Punjabi, or the Gurmukhi languages, with sometimes Hindi, and in the higher classes they teach English too. In addition to receiving free education, some of the pupils have special carriages provided to take them to and from school. There has been an all-round improvement in educational activity in Patiala State during the rule

of the present Maharaja, and the number of recognised institutions has increased continuously during the past few years. Besides the Government High Schools there are three endowed schools for Mohammedans, Hindus and Sikhs. These schools get an annual grant from the Government, and their pupils go later to the State College for free higher education.

I visited the Rajindra hospital accompanied by Mr. Boon, the Chief Officer of the Health Department. The wards were neat and tidy, and had all possible arrangements for treating sick people. This hospital is free both as regards medicine and treatment, and health instruction of every kind is given, a State Sanitary Inspector visiting the homes of the people to teach and advise them. There is accommodation for 80 patients, and following the English system, in addition to the open wards there are two sets of rooms for paying patients, who are charged very reasonable fees indeed. In the operating theatre of the hospital, which is equipped with X-ray, modern instruments and with electric and steam sterilisers, the major operations are performed by the Director of Medical Services, under whom there work four assistant surgeons, six sub-assistant surgeons and twelve dispensary chemists. There are two special departments—the dental department, which is in charge of a qualified dentist; and the ophthalmic ward, in charge of an assistant surgeon who has received special training in London in diseases of the eye, ear, throat and nose, and who holds a special qualification in these branches of medicine. Before this hospital was built people died in their thousands for want of medical help. Now they can have free treatment for all their ills. But there are other aspects of the fight against disease. In 1886 the State purchased the private laboratory of Lieut.-Col. C. J. Fox, the Chief Medical Officer, and it has proved of the greatest value. All tests are conducted free of

charge, and vaccines are also prepared and supplied free. This laboratory is in touch with all the hospitals and clinics. While I was there I saw a number of tests conducted from a batch of tubes sent in from the Women's Hospital, another excellently managed institution, and was thrilled by the skill and despatch the experts showed.

I next visited the Agricultural School which His Highness maintains to teach his people how to keep the land in good order, so as to have better produce. Students come from all the villages to obtain the benefit of this education. When they have received instruction they go home and teach the farmers how to cultivate the land according to scientific methods. The school is open to every farmer, or would-be farmer, who cares to go, and special attention is given to the study and combating of the pests which spoil their plantations. Experts are also sent to the farms to examine the earth, and tell every farmer what kind of plant should be sown in it. Specimens are exhibited of the different kinds of worms and insects, the locust, for example, that are to be specially feared. His Highness pays great regard to cultivation, and a special prize is presented each year to the best farmer. Further to encourage them, His Highness goes himself to see their work. He told me that he was especially keen to see good machinery installed. In the school of agriculture there are many agricultural machines, all of which are made in Patiala. An ingenious device to kill big rats has lately been invented by the director of the school.

The Minister of Justice and Law was the next official whom I asked for information, and he arranged for me a visit to the Central Jail of Patiala, accompanied by the governor and the doctor of the jail. Before we entered the governor explained to me that the huge area of land that I saw on either side of the buildings

was used for teaching the prisoners agriculture, so that after they left the jail, they might earn their livings honourably and have no need to steal, nor suffer poverty. We first saw the hospital of the jail, where many prisoners were being treated, most of them suffering from malaria. I was astonished to find the hospital so clean and well kept, and to see that the same treatment was given to all men without distinction of caste or creed.

My guides next took me to the cells where those guilty of serious crime are kept, after which we saw those who were condemned to death. Amongst them was a young man who told me his story—that he killed a man without intending to kill him, and that when he realised that he was going to be attacked and killed by members of the dead man's family he threw himself down from the roof to the street and broke his foot. "So God has punished me already," said he, "and now I am depending on the mercy of His Highness who alone can pardon me." I was glad to learn that clemency was probable in his case, since extenuating circumstances had been proved.

Continuing my tour, I was shown the kitchen, where food and bread were cooked for the prisoners. The best sort of bread was given to the prisoners, and nicely prepared pelaw, with meat and sauce, which the majority of them do not get every day in their homes.

My next visit was to the prison factory, where they make carpets and weave cloth and turn out shawls and blankets. All these were displayed on a large stone slab for sale, for any visitor is allowed to buy whatever takes his fancy. I bought ten yards of silk, which was of good quality. The prisoners numbered about five hundred, I was told, and most of them were clever with their hands.

In the women's jail I found in one room about eleven women. I asked the governor whether they

His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala

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had children. One of them said, "I have got a boy in the Yatimkhana (the orphanage), please let me see him." The Governor promised to bring him to her.

"Thank God," I said, when we left, "that the women offending are so few. In the whole State only eleven!" Just then I heard terrible groans, and thought for a moment someone was being tortured. Then I laughed. In the jail yard were cows and buffaloes which supply the milk!

"I am glad," said His Highness to me when I asked permission to see the palace, "that you have first been to the schools and farms. They are what really count. Then he very kindly made me welcome to see all his possessions, which I found of the utmost interest. His Highness the Jahraja Dhiraja is very fond of collecting the precious medals of different kingdoms. In his palace there is the "Medal Room," which every tourist goes to see. It contains all the old and new medals of the world, framed and hung on the walls. Chief among them is the Order of the Garter, which is set with precious diamonds. When His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor) visited Patiala, he was astonished to learn that this medal had been sold to His Highness. It appears that in the whole of Britain there are only twenty-four of these orders and that all save four were returned to the Sovereign after the deaths of their owners.

In the palace I was shown the Royal bed, in which the Prince of Wales slept when he was the Maharaja's guest. It is the most superbly decorated bed that I have ever seen in my life, but then every piece of furniture in the Moti Bagh palace is simply wonderful, the crystal lamps and the glorious Persian carpets being especially lovely.

His Highness makes no distinction between caste and creed. Many of his Ministers, A.D.C.s and other high officials are Mohammedan, although His Highness

is a Sikh. He is of a very hospitable disposition, and though a fine sportsman is also a lover of books.

In the State there is a High Court, or Chief's Court, where the Prince himself presides over the fountain-head of justice, looks into the matters himself and delivers final judgment.

His Highness, the Yuvraja, is a handsome young man, with an outlook on life very like his father's, in whose footsteps he follows. He is the chief of the police. He enters his office at nine in the morning and leaves it at nine in the evening, never depending on others, but doing his own work for himself. He represents his father in his absence, and is a worthy deputy. Acknowledged the best polo player in the State, he is an all round sportsman, but he is of studious disposition, and his hobby is collecting stamps.

At the suggestion of the Maharaja, we took the guest-house motor and went out into the Serwal village, where the people came to greet us with their families. We visited some of the houses in order to see how they were living. All their houses are clean and in order. You can see cotton and wool kept in one corner of the house and wheat in the other. They store their grain in barrels made of mud.

At the Chano Village I visited the boys' school, and was charmed to find the pupils very clever and keen on their studies. They are taught Gurmukhi as the first language. On every door of the village was written "Welcome." Near the school there is the village well, where all the village meets to chat. As we stood there the people kindly gave us grapes and apples.

In every village I passed through, I asked the people if they had any grievance or were ill used in any way. All with one voice said that they were happy. And they looked happy, too. Some of the villages consist of two hundred houses, others of six hundred. The population is very mixed, and there are Sikhs, Hindus

and Mohammedans, all enjoying perfectly equal rights and having the same treatment, living together just like one family. Truly I found life pleasant in Patiala State.

I know there is not very much that is exciting in what I have written of Patiala, but that is perhaps the chief merit of the State. It has been my purpose to show that there are parts of India splendidly governed, and to deny that misery and misrule are universal. In Patiala I saw huge electric works, aerodromes, factories—all manner of great schemes, and amid it all an agricultural people living in happiness under a ruler who has earned their love.

CHAPTER XXIII

STATE BANQUET AT KAPURTHALA

We left the territories of the Maharaja of Patiala by train for the city of Kapurthala, capital of the famous State of that name. Just as we were boarding the train a telegram arrived from His Highness the Maharaja, whom I had met some years before when he was *en route* for Europe, in which he bade me welcome to his country, and said that he hoped we should be in time for the celebration of his birthday, the great feast day of the year in Kapurthala State.

When we arrived at Jelundhar, the frontier station, a young A.D.C. came to receive us, and escorted us to the palace in a very beautiful motor car which had been placed at our disposal. I learned afterwards that His Highness the Maharaja is famous for his fleet of magnificent cars, every one of which (and they number some forty or fifty) is kept in a state of shining perfection by a small army of skilled mechanics, many of whom were trained in England.

From Jelundhar to Kapurthala is no great distance, and as we emerged from the business districts we passed along wide, well-made roads, bordered with graceful trees. We soon caught sight of the dome of the royal palace, a huge white building, flanked with marble columns, well-named indeed the Versailles of the East, which cost more than £2,000,000 to build.

Against the ethereal blue of the noon sky the Palace stood out in flawless splendour. As we turned into the wide courtyard we passed through a rose garden in full bloom. Roses of every hue were massed in beds of intricate design and round them all, a smooth and

restful carpet, stretched the lawns, beyond which stood the white guest houses, each a palace in miniature.

A tall Sikh on sentry duty, turbanned like a Bengal lancer and very smart in his uniform of dark blue, saluted as we passed. Our car drew up at the wide marble stairway which leads to the entrance hall and soon we were taken to one of the famous salons. Each of these great rooms has a special name according to its decoration. The style is French throughout, every detail of the furniture being in harmony with the architectural design. "Louis Quatorze," the A.D.C. whispered to me, indicating the ornate baroque of the stately chamber, in which intricate sculpture and colourful painting were combined with wonderful effect.

After a few minutes of waiting, during which we did not cease to admire our surroundings, the Maharaja entered the room through the high doorway on the far side, his manner, despite the throng of servants who attended him, superb in its regal simplicity. In that beautiful setting, designed so many years before for the glory of "Le Roi Soleil," His Highness of Kapurthala moved with a quiet dignity, dressed in a dark grey suit which now that my travels have taken me to London I know was of a kind that only Bond Street (or thereabouts) can produce. It is not his custom to wear a turban save on formal occasions, and as he came towards us, smiling and stretching out his hand in greeting, I saw the high forehead which denotes the thinker. My brother and I rose to meet him, but having shaken hands he at once motioned us to be seated, sitting himself beside us on a chair of delicate workmanship brought forward by two attendants. The upholstery of the chair was of light blue silk with golden embroidery, as were all the furnishings of the room.

"I am glad you have reached Kapurthala in time for our celebrations," he said. "To-night you must be

my guest at our State banquet, and then for the eight days of our festivities. But I hope you will stay with me much longer than that, for though I am glad for you to see our State *en fête*, it is the every-day life of our people which you have come here to study. That will take time, I know, for there are many places which I wish you to visit. Stay with us as long as you can, and I promise that you will have every facility for travel and enquiry of any kind."

After these kindly words he rose and left us, at which the A.D.C. came forward to conduct us to our apartments. These were large, airy rooms furnished with simple perfection in modern European style. We rested for the remainder of the day, and then prepared for the State Banquet, which began soon after eight o'clock. We were ushered into the large salon where the Maharaja received his guests in person, moving among them just as a European host might have done; for this was a formal function to which every important official had been invited. The Indian ceremonies, I learned, were to take place on the following day, when the full and gorgeous ritual of the East would be observed.

The banquet was served with perfection of taste, the menu, which was a credit to the chefs concerned, being planned on Parisian lines. The plate was of silver, the cutlery of silver and gold; but by far the most beautiful of the table appointments were the silken napkins which were of Indian workmanship and design.

On the right hand of the Maharaja sat the wife of Sir James Fitzpatrick (the popular and distinguished British official who was then the Agent to the Governor General) and I, to my great surprise, found myself on the left hand of my host, having been escorted into dinner by his son, His Highness Maharajkumar Amarjit Singh. The Prime Minister of the State,

Sir Abdul Hamid, rose at length to open the speeches, speaking in faultless English, and welcoming his ruler back from his travels in the West. The toast of long life and prosperity to His Highness was then drunk amid general acclamation, after which Sir James Fitzpatrick paid a warm tribute to his host. I learned of the loyal services which the State of Kapurthala had rendered to the Empire during the great War and after, and of the many generous charities with which the name of the Maharaja will always be linked both in England and in his own dominions. The Maharaja then proposed the health of the King Emperor, saying that the firm friendship which had existed for so long between Great Britain and Kapurthala grew always stronger with the passage of the years.

The speeches having been concluded, conversation became freer and more general, and turning to me, the Maharaja began to enquire concerning his Egyptian friends. While staying as the guest of King Fuad, in Cairo, he had made the acquaintance of Zul-Fikar Pasha and Hassanein Bey, chamberlains to the King, both good friends of mine. When I told him that I knew them well, he asked me to be sure to write to them from his Palace conveying his warm regard and telling them that he was glad to repay to me, their friend, a small part of the many kindnesses he owed to them. Such is the perfect courtesy of the East.

The Maharanee and the Princesses were seated among the guests, their beautiful saris making welcome splashes of colour among the rather sombre evening clothes of the men.

One of these ladies, wife of Maharaja Kumar Karamjit Singh, fourth son of His Highness, delighted us all by a short speech, which she delivered on her husband's behalf. The Princess, whom I met on many

occasions afterwards, is perhaps the most beautiful woman in India, her dark beauty and exquisite grace of movement making her every gesture a poem come to life. Her skin is fair, which makes her loveliness still more striking; while her voice is of that silvery quality found so often in romances and so rarely in real life.

Music was played throughout the banquet by a military band, and at the close of the feast we rose to honour the national hymn, after which we passed once more into the salon, where I found myself called upon to recite the Arabic verses which I had composed in honour of the royal birthday.

"It is not only lamps which shine to-night,
For friendship glows in every heart and glance.
Were every lantern darkened this palace still were bright,
Glittering with splendour in night's dark expanse.

I had felt bound to make reference to the brilliant illuminations which honoured the celebrations, for never had I seen so dazzling a spectacle. Walking through the wide, cool porticoes in the softness of the dark we saw everywhere around us a glittering phantasy of lights. Given magic by distance, the strains of the music followed us, every cadence merging with the whisper of the light winds among the flowers and shrubs. Although there were so many of us walking in those lovely gardens each one could feel alone, so perfect was the spell of the night.

Waking on the following morning I saw the rich sunlight pour in through my window and heard from without the palace walls the stirrings of the great crowds which had gathered for the religious rites of the day. Soon they were admitted to the audience halls of the palace where they stood in silence.

Coffee, fruits, and rolls (chota hazri) were served to us in our rooms, but breakfast, which was at ten o'clock, was laid in a dining-room where my brother

and I found all the personal guests of the Maharaja, who were staying at the palace for the ceremonies, gathered together. Indian and European tastes were catered for with every variety of breakfast dish. I do not think that the celebrated breakfast menu of the liner, *Queen Mary*, offered nearly so great a choice.

French is the universal language of the palace, and is spoken by all the principal functionaries. It was in this language that an A.D.C. addressed me, saying that the ceremonies were about to begin. We took our places in the vast hall which opened on to a pillared terrace above the gardens. Our chairs were set at the palace end of the hall, among slender columns of white marble. Before us were the divans prepared for the royal princes and their father. Beyond the Hindu priests were mustered, all in white robes and turbans and sitting cross-legged on carpets. Beyond them were the people, similarly seated, while the walls of the room were lined by statuesque Sikh guards.

Sir James Fitzpatrick was sitting near us in a place of honour, and he whispered to me that I must have my camera ready, since the entry of His Highness would be a scene well worth recording. He very kindly made room for me so that I was able to get a good picture of several stages of the ceremony.

Now all was ready. Two stalwart chokadhars called in loud voices that His Highness was approaching. Everyone rose in greeting as the glittering procession of the princes appeared at the head of a wide stairway leading down into the hall. Attended by his five sons, the Maharaja took up his station on the divan, and when he was seated priests and multitude sank back to the ground once more. His Highness was dressed in a long tunic of light violet silk with gold chains and embroidery. A band of white silk was across his tunic, and in his turban, which matched his tunic

in colour, rich jewels could be seen. His shoes, which curved upward at the toe, were also richly woven with gold.

The Maharaja had explained the significance of the ceremonies to me at the banquet the night before. "I am a Sikh," he had said, "but my ancestors, for many centuries, were Hindus, and the ritual which you see to-morrow is of that faith. Once every year, on my birthday, I appear before the Hindu priest-hood in honour of the long tradition of our House."

The high priest was the first to move. Bringing a white napkin forward he spread it upon the Maharaja's knees and then presented a large round tray of beaten metal on which I could see all manner of ingredients. Flour, wheat, rice, and spices were thus offered to His Highness, who touched each in turn, after which the tray was taken back. A bowl of water was next presented, into which the ruler plunged his hands. A beautiful lotus flower of light orange tint (the Sikh colour) was then placed before the ruler, who touched it and returned it in the same manner. "These are all gifts to the Gods," whispered Sir James to me, seeing the puzzled look on my face.

Two thick cords, one white and one red, were next presented to His Highness, who pulled them towards him, and then placed them in the hand of the high priest.

"What does this mean?" I asked.

I was told that in the garden were tethered a horse and a cow, gifts from the Maharaja to his priesthood, which were made each year. It was not possible to introduce the actual animals into the hall, but these cords, which were very long, were actually round their necks, and the handing of them to the priest was a sign that the gift was bestowed.

A ceremonial washing of hands then followed, after which came the ceremony of the scales. Beside the

priest was a balance, its wooden beams bound in bright-coloured silk. On one side of the balance was a chair in which His Highness was seated while on the other side small sacks of rupees were piled together with silver coinage until the scale was even. The money thus weighed was given to the poor.

The Hindu ceremonies were now completed, and the officials of the court now preceded His Highness to the Gurdwara, or Sikh Temple, where further rites were to be performed. We made the journey to the temple in motor cars, passing through the crowded streets where the populace were cheering their monarch.

The whole route was a blaze of colour, for the costumes of the crowd were brilliant, and on every side banners and streamers of all manner of hues were fluttering gaily in the bright air.

As we drew up outside the temple I heard a low bellowing sound, and saw that it came from one of a long string of elephants—I counted six, and I think there were more—which I was told were waiting in readiness for the State procession.

Seated upon a high throne His Highness received the "Nazar," or gifts of loyalty. Each one of his officials approached in turn and offered tribute of gold coins—English sovereigns, according to their wealth. The money was presented always in a red silk handkerchief which the Maharaja took in his right hand, never examining the contents, and placed beneath his throne. He then bowed gracious thanks, which salutation the official would return, walking backwards, from his presence into the waiting ranks. When it was the turn of the officers of the guard and army to render homage they did not offer money, but drew their long bright swords from the polished leather scabbards till half the blade was free. Having done this they bowed and thrust back the sword, saluting in British military fashion at the same time. The

dignity of bearing of these men and the simple sincerity of their action made an impressive scene.

I had no gift for His Highness, but there is an old Arabic verse which gave me comfort.

> "Having neither steed nor coin
> for my King, yet deeply beholden,
> let a poor poet sing
> whose words shall be golden.

Taking heart from this, I had prepared some verses of congratulation which the late Saradar Charan Singh Shahid, famous poet of the punjab, had kindly offered to translate into "Gurmuki," the Sikh Punjabi language. Dressed in a beautiful sari, a present to me from Her Highness the Maharanee, I delivered my ode, and to my intense surprise, a little later, when medals were awarded to the various officials of the court, my name was called, and a very beautiful golden medal was presented to me. As the Maharaja pinned it to my sari he whispered a line of my poem to show me he remembered it, more delicate compliment than any formal praise could have been.

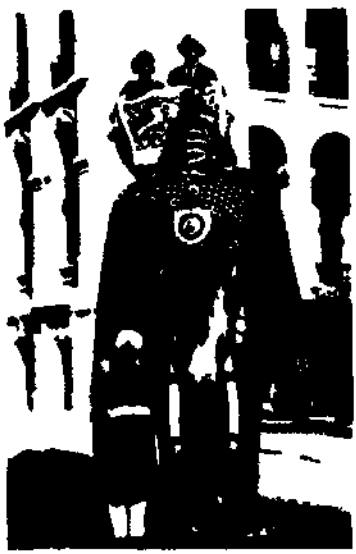
From my position near the throne I had a splendid view of the crowded temple, a large square, white-washed building, with balconies and wide windows through which the light poured down upon a richly-coloured crowd. Rich robes and smart uniforms were everywhere; and in a gallery at the far end the ladies of the court were watching.

The holy book of the Sikh religion lay on the table before the throne and the Maharaja now rose and went towards it. As he did so the priests removed the silken covering. Their ruler bowed before it, placed a rich gift upon the table, and scattered flowers, while the high priest, seated between two guards with lifted swords, prayed. The other members of the priesthood were seated in a circle nearby, and now began their music. The strangest instrument which I saw was a

A CAMEL RIDE

IN SHIKARA KASHMIR

TONGA CART



STATE ELEPHANT KALPATHALA

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small harmonium played with one hand while the other worked the bellows.

For all its apparent awkwardness this instrument could produce most lovely sounds. The worshippers joined in, singing a hymn of the great Guru Nanak founder of the Sikh religion.

It was he who first preached among the Hindus the faith of one true God, father of Mankind. Hence there are many affinities between his teachings and those of Christ. Sikh temples have no idols, and only the sacred book, Holy Grant, is an object of reverence. Love is the great principle of Guru Nanak's creed, love and the immanence of God, but the great teacher would never speak of himself as a prophet standing between God and his people. During my travels in India I found myself much attracted by the beauties of the Sikh teaching, simplest and most practical of the many faiths.

While the priests and the people were chanting their hymns to God the Maharaja left the temple, attended by his four sons. In the court of the temple a number of elephants, all richly caparisoned, were waiting, and all round stood the thronging multitude. When His Highness appeared shouts and wild cheering rent the air. The first elephant knelt at the command of its leader and the Maharaja mounted a silver ladder to the "howdah" upon its back, which was made of silver and gold. The cloth which draped the back of the elephant was richly wrought with gold and silver, and the animal's trunk was painted with brilliant colours. Each tusk was tipped with gold and ringed with silver and on the huge feet were silver rings. The howdah in which His Highness sat was decorated with costly silks, and at its front were two lions at least three feet high, each of solid gold.

All the elephants were splendidly clad, and the procession, when at last it moved, was a very fine sight

indeed. The lancers led the way and the State guards brought up the rear. There was music and the firing of cannon to add to the noise of the crowd. Progress was slow, but at length the palace was reached, by which time the dusk was upon us and the myriad lights of the festival were twinkling all around. Our motor car, one of a long string, which followed close upon the cortège of elephants, set us down at our door with just time enough to prepare for the second banquet which was to begin at nine.

In the absence of Lady Fitzpatrick, who had left with her husband for Lahore, I found myself on the Maharaja's right hand, having been escorted by him to the table. When he had asked me what I thought of the day's proceedings I could not conceal my childlike delight in the beautifully adorned elephants. "How I should like to ride like that," I said. "But, my dear lady," said the ruler, "what could be simpler. To-morrow my elephant shall be at your service. You shall ride him where you please."

He was as good as his word. Shortly before noon on the following day there appeared before our apartment His Highness's own elephant with its leader and guide. I was invited to mount with my brother into the luxurious howdah, and we were taken for a long ride. And then, as a final kindness, I found, just as I was wondering how I could photograph the elephant while seated on his back, that the A.D.C. who was in charge of us had brought a photographer to make a picture for us which the Maharaja said he would keep as a souvenir of our visit, while he hoped that we should always remember the feast day at Kapurthala.

CHAPTER XXIV

KAPURTHALA: THE MODEL STATE

In the state of Kapurthala, which lies along the eastern bank of the River Beas, a lovely embowered stream whose deep green waters swarm with fish, while birds of many colours dart through the hanging foliage, three hundred thousand inhabitants dwell in an area of about six hundred and fifty square miles. The river is the great highway of the State, for in spite of its beauty it has great commercial value. His Highness the Maharaja insisted on placing his private launch at our disposal, and together with a party of equally favoured guests we went down-stream for a delightful cruise. Through the trees we could see glimpses of level plains in which crops of every kind, all carefully tended, flourish throughout the year. Glimpsed through the darker shades of the trees the delicate greens of the springing corn-lands were like a beautiful pastel picture, an unusual sight in India, which is a land of primary colours and fierce contrast. Later I went by car among the villages and talked to the villagers. They are a happy and contented people, each family owning its little plot of land, on which they pay by no means heavy taxes, which are collected at stated times by the head man, or Zamindar. At each village this official came to welcome us and show us proudly the excellent results of his husbandry. Mangoes were brought to us to taste, both ripened for raw eating and made into delicious pickle or chutney. Small custard apples, calabash pears, lichi—a small round pineapple-skinned plum, of exquisite flavour, but with more stone for its size than any

fruit I have ever seen—all these were spread before us.

I was surprised at the degree of intensive cultivation everywhere to be seen. Not one square foot of land seemed to be wasted, and irrigation channels, skilfully designed, were everywhere to be found. In the muddy soil of the fields the Sikh labourers, each with his "kurpan" (a short sheathed dagger worn on the hip as a religious symbol) worked cheerfully, often singing the hymns of their faith.

In every town or large village there is a house set apart for the Maharaja should he come there. These are known as rest houses, and very pleasantly furnished. A steward, usually with his wife and children, live close by, and when warned that their ruler or any of his guests are approaching, they prepare fried chicken and curry, mango pickle and sweet jams. The bedrooms are furnished in European style, and there is excellent modern plumbing.

The average village consists of about two hundred huts built more or less haphazard around a central square. All the animals are kept near the huts. Cows, goats, buffalo, are to be seen in plenty, but not many sheep. Poultry are plentiful, and they are always scratching up the ground among the houses.

Each village has a school for boys and another for girls; also a hospital, or dispensary, where first aid can be administered. Each dispensary is in charge of a trained native "orderly," who has been well grounded in the new gospel of hygiene of which India stands so greatly in need. I saw two men who had come to blows treated for their wounds, and was very favourably impressed by the quiet skill with which the disinfection of the injuries was carried out. In the early days of hospital work, I was told, the natives went in fear of these strange white houses where all manner of secret magic was

performed. Rather than submit to these strange new practices they would hide their ills until past all medical aid. But now that the work has been carried on for some years an entirely new attitude is to be found. Each cure is a splendid endorsement of the new methods, and rather than fear and scepticism there is now to be found an almost pathetic faith in the power of the hospital to work miracles.

There are five main towns in Kapurthala State, each town being the administrative centre for the "tehsil" or county. In order of their importance these are: Kapurthala, Sultanpur, Phagwara, Bholath, and Bhunga. Each of these towns and the areas around them is in charge of a Tehsildar, who is responsible for the general well-being of the community and for the collection of revenue. These men were once judges as well as administrators, but the very sound English principle that judicial functions shall be kept as separate as possible from all others, has now been followed, and the courts are in the hands of Munsiffs, who deal with much the same cases as a County Court Judge in England would hear. If the sum of money in dispute in a civil case is over Rs. 1,000 it must be referred to the central court in the State capital. A court of appeal, consisting of three senior judges, has the final word in civil cases, but the power to pass sentence of life imprisonment or death is held by His Highness the Maharaja. I learned, however, that far from seeking to centralise power in his own hands, His Highness tries always to increase the degree of self-government of his municipalities, and in order to render justice swifter and cheaper in the smaller villages another class of magistrate has recently been created—the Punchayat, whose judicial power is confined to rural areas and to cases in which the disputed value does not exceed one hundred rupees.

My expectation had been to find justice slow, uncertain, and unequal; but after more careful enquiry I was forced to admit that the various grades of courts functioned admirably, while bribery, that terrible vice of the East, seemed to have been considerably checked.

It is always easy to feel whether the poor people of a country approach the courts with confidence or with terror, and it was on instinctive impressions that I relied rather than what was told me, for the knowledge that I was a personal guest of His Highness might, I knew, prevent me from hearing the truth. Now men can suppress the truth, but they cannot ever create an atmosphere of justice where there is none. In Kapurthala I could soon tell from my varied knowledge of the Eastern mind that the law was rightly held in real respect by men of every class.

Of the state revenue which totals roughly 25 lakhs (one lakh equals 100,000 rupees, and there are thirteen rupees to the pound) no less than 2 lakhs is expended on education. I determined to pay attention to the village school rather than to the impressive colleges, for I felt that the reality of education would be found (*if it existed*) among the homes of the poor people. The first question I asked was: Do the children of these villages have to come to school? No, I was told, there is as yet no compulsory education, though we have the thin end of the wedge in various parts of the State where compulsion has been applied to limited areas to see how it works. So far the results have been encouraging, and before long we hope that there will be no child in the whole State to whom free primary education is not compulsory by law; but it is necessary in this, as in all reforms, to move a step at a time. Nowhere else in India is there anything like so much education as here, but it must

KALUTHARA: THE IDEALIZED CELEBRATIONS
1. THE MAHARAJA ENTERS THE SCALES
2. ELEPHANT PARADE
3. THE MAHARAJA RECEIVES HOMAGE
4. RULE OF S CEREMONIAL

Face page 284

be admitted that our position is rather favourable since the whole area is accessible and the problem of manageable size. Besides, we have enjoyed a liberal administration longer than most parts of the country.

There must be at least a hundred primary schools in Kapurthala, and no expense whatever is borne by the parents of the children who attend. The typical village school is a small white-walled building of one storey with desks for the older scholars, mats for the younger children, and slates for them all. They are a very pretty sight, each youngster with his white turban from which the long strings hang down. Dinner is always carried wrapped in a coloured handkerchief, and is eaten in a separate room. No religious distinction of any kind is made, and thus the children of Sikhs, Hindus, Mohammedans, and even Parsees mix together freely without the least thought for the differences of faith which divide their parents and have in the past brought so much misery to the land. There are not many Christians in Kapurthala, but I was shown Christian children at work with the others, and found them happy and quite unconscious of belonging to an alien Church.

In the hot season, and indeed at all times of the year, lessons are held in the open air. The children sit in a circle on their straw mats and the teacher stands in the centre with blackboard and chalk in European style. Each boy has a slate, an exercise book, a primer, an inkwell and a reed pen. I examined these textbooks (which are all in the English language) and found that they were the ordinary simple spelling lessons which every English child must learn. I asked one little fellow what he was studying, and he told me with the utmost seriousness: "C-A-T, cat, M-A-T, mat. . . . From his tone I gathered that he attached deep and mysterious significance to these words. He was a Mohammedan, I found,

and at home he was taught the Koran by his father. Thus he had ingrained in him the belief that books were holy things, and he approached the study of cats and the mats on which they sat with profound reverence.

There was something extremely attractive in this young pupil's solemnity, and I reflected that there was much to be said for thinking of all knowledge as a holy thing.

After attending a Kapurthala primary school from the age of seven years until ten the pupil has a working knowledge of no less than three languages. The language of the Punjab is written in Arabic characters and the Sikhs have the same spoken tongue, but write it in characters of their own. This written language is called Gurmuki; it was invented to meet obvious needs. Urdu, the common tongue of all India, is Sanscrit with various accretions from the Arabic and Persian. Urdu, of course, is often called Hindustani, and there is a movement in favour of wider use of this name. Urdu is written in Arabic characters. With English it will take you anywhere in India.

In Sultanpur I went to a high school, a beautiful modern building, white, spotlessly clean and equipped with all possible efficiency. There I was greeted by the headmaster who explained the system of study.

A calm-voiced, highly cultured man of considerable educational experience, he moved among his pupils in fatherly fashion, obviously truly loved and respected by them all. His dress was European, but he wore a white turban. His staff, who were all in speech and manner very like their chief, were some of them in native costume. Later in the day when the inspection was over we chatted over our iced drinks, and they revealed themselves as citizens of the world.

The wish to travel seemed to dominate their minds,

but it was travel with a purpose on which their hearts were set. Their work of education was clearly what they lived for, and it was to see other schools and to improve their methods that they wished to cross the seas.

"How does our work compare with that of teachers in other countries?" they asked. "That is what we want to know. Outside examinations provide some sort of test, but it is on the instruction given to the average student that a school must be judged. The clever ones bring us credit, but it is our constant purpose to raise the normal standard rather than to score a few brilliant successes every year."

They had little reason to reproach themselves, for I found their methods both thorough and altogether sound. A selected number of pupils from the primary schools were put through more advanced courses in English mathematics, and commerce. Next in rank is the central college, in Kapurthala, where students receive preparation for the University of Lahore. From there it is possible for the brilliant scholar to win his way to England and the supreme achievement of an English University Degree.

In the High School some of the classes were taking place in the open air in a beautiful tree-fringed playing field, a stretch of spendid turf of which any English public school might have been proud. I was invited to examine the students, and asked them questions in geography and arithmetic, but I soon found that their mathematical skill was such that the ground was dangerous for me, so I concentrated on questions concerning the different countries of the world, especially those in which I had recently travelled, matters in which I was sure I could hold my own. The answers were given without hesitation, and a very high percentage were correct. They were all highly delighted to have an Eastern lady addressing them, for they had seen many European visitors,

but rarely one whom they considered of their own race and tongue, while the announcement that I was a poetess and had written a poem to the Maharaja especially impressed them. When I had talked to them about the places I had seen, a senior rose and thanked me on behalf of his class, speaking in English and using excellently chosen words.

Afterwards they gave a short athletic display, including native games, which I found of great interest. One of the games consisted of each boy kneeling in turn while the rest jumped over him. I had never seen this before, and later when I met an Englishman I described to him how much I had been amused by this strange custom of the East. Of course he roared with laughter, telling me that it was an old English game of "leap frog," and that he had played it himself when a boy at home.

At a girls' school in Sultanpur I was charmed by the pleasing manners of the students, who clustered round me without any fear or shyness, but with perfect courtesy. The costume they wore consisted of coloured trousers of velvet or silk hanging loosely to ankle length, and a white tunic reaching to their knees. Over their heads and shoulders they all wore a short scarf, some of these of extremely beautiful designs, except some of the elder girls, who wore the complete sari. The shoes were richly embroidered and turned up to a point in true Punjabi fashion.

I was shown exquisite embroidery which the pupils had worked, and spent an interesting hour in the kitchen, where instruction is given in cookery and other household arts. First aid had a very important place in the curriculum, and every girl knew how to attend to a burn or a cut or even a simple fracture. Their scholastic studies were not neglected and I was surprised to find that they studied the sacred books. While the mathematics were not insisted on

to the same degree as in the boys' schools, by special command of His Highness the Maharaja there is no distinction in the curriculum, and the girls are taught the same subjects as the boys. I saw the class specially for the Mohammedan girls where a teacher was explaining the Koran. This teacher and some of the others kept strict purdah, so the A.D.C. to whom I had been entrusted could not enter the building. The old customs are slowly dying out, however, for they are clearly unsuited to modern developments, and even the most conscientious followers of the different religions have begun to realise the need for moving with the times. The Maharaja, while exercising the most scrupulous respect for religious feelings, is gradually modernizing his State in every way. The girls questioned me eagerly concerning my travels. They seemed to see in my freedom a symbol of what the future may hold for them. "How wonderful," said one of them, "to be a woman and to travel!" Even more astonished were they when I said that I earned money on my travels by lecturing and writing. "It must be wonderful to earn money," they said, "to work for it and feel it in your hand as your very own!" Daughters of peasants, merchants and officials were all together in the school, and yet I saw no signs of snobbery anywhere. Simplicity and good manners were everywhere to be seen.

The college of Kapurthala is a huge building of red stone not far from the palace. Five hundred students, drawn from all parts of the State, learn arts and sciences here under European instructors. There are, however, a number of Indian professors on the staff, and the head of the college is an Indian, a man who could take his place among the learned men of any nation.

For some hours I went from room to room, examining the fine chemical and physics laboratories, pausing

with interest in the biological museum, praising the really distinguished work which was on view in the spacious department of Art. Having been invited to address the student body, I thought carefully over what I should say, for I was not a little scared of the educational magnificence amid which I moved. I need not have worried, however, for they gave me a warm welcome, and listened to my analysis of the Purdah problem with a close attention, of which their subsequent questions were the best evidence.

The main point which I endeavoured to bring home to them was that the veil was a social and not a religious institution. In the days of the Prophet, I said, addressing the Mohammedans, there was no veil. As to how it arose there are many versions, but it must be fairly clear to any impartial observer that it was merely a device on the part of the rich man to hide the beauties of his harem from covetous glances. The Prophet's instructions on the matter relate merely to attendance at the mosque. Mohammed, like Saint Paul, was nervous that the beauty of women might distract men from worship. He never intended that in every day life a woman's face should be hidden.

All this and much more I said, and was subjected to good tempered and well-reasoned criticism after my speech. "Take the veil from the mind," I told them, "and soon it will disappear from the face." Education is the key to all progress—of that I am sure; and I left Kapurthala College well satisfied that it is playing a worthy part in laying the foundations of the great revival which is soon to come to the East.

In Sultanpur—that is "The City of the Sultan," for this town is the ancient capital of the Punjab—I went to pay homage to the founder of the Sikh religion at the actual place of his birth on the out-

skirts of the town. The humble and ancient dwelling where Guru Nanak, the philosopher, lived for many years is a place of pilgrimage for all good Sikhs. The golden temple at Amritsar is the more famous shrine, but I found there was a quiet beauty in the little stone house at Sultanpur which I felt put me more closely in touch with the great Sikh saint than all the splendour of golden domes and towers.

Guru Nanak, whose story is perhaps the most appealing legend of the great faiths of India, lived in the times of the Moghul Emperors, and was a Modi, or quartermaster, in the army. It was his duty to weigh out the grain and other stores which were given to the troops, and as he worked he meditated concerning the nature of God, whom he was convinced was the one eternal principle of life and holiness to which the whole world owed allegiance.

So real did the presence of God become to him even in the midst of his daily work that as he weighed he would say: Tera, tera—that is the Punjabi word for "thirteen," but it also means "yours." Guru Nanak was speaking to God and saying: "I am yours!"

The officials saw that Guru Nanak was giving out the grain as though in a trance, and that he was saying "thirteen, thirteen," yet often giving much more. They therefore watched him closely, and at length he was accused to the Emperor of squandering the resources of the State.

The Emperor was a just man and ordered that a most careful enquiry should be made before he would believe the accusations. On an appointed day there was an audit, and to the consternation of the accusers it was found that though there was evidence in plenty that men had received more than that to which they were entitled, nevertheless there remained in the store an even greater balance than that which an

exact calculation had established as the right amount. The goods had increased while in the charge of the wasteful Guru Nanak.

The Moghul Emperor was puzzled.

"Why did you always say 'thirteen, thirteen,'?" he asked.

But Guru Nanak smiled.

"Nay, sire," he answered. "I named no figure. I said to God: I am yours, I am yours. . . ."

"And how do you explain the increase in your stores?" asked the Moghul.

Guru Nanak smiled again. Simply, yet with wondrous power, he told the Emperor of the might of God. When the human soul was dedicated to God's service all that the hands touched must grow and grow. And then he revealed to his ruler all the mysteries of life and death and of the power which the great ruler of the Universe can alone bestow; and the Emperor knew that he spoke with a holy man, and listened, and gave to Guru Nanak all freedom to preach the word of God.

In Sultanpur they showed me the very stone weights which Guru Nanak used, and the tree which he planted, now a beautiful green shelter for mankind. This grows in the courtyard before his old house. It is called the beri tree, and the small nuts which it bears are taken by the pilgrims as token of their journey.

Not far away from the birthplace of the great teacher is one of the oldest bridges in India, over which the Moghul armies marched into the Punjab. All round are thickly clustered palm trees, very rare in India, save in the province of Sind, and among them are the broken columns of masonry which saw so much bloodshed, marching and countermarching, in the old days before the coming of the great Clive with the muskets of the West.

But if the bridge was destroyed by time, time had touched little else in that scene. Across the river, which flowed peaceful as ever, black buffaloes slowly waded, laden with rich fertilising earth on its way to the plantations. The air was still, but the stillness was more profound than that of nature. It seemed to be an ultimate, unchanging stillness, and I felt that those buffaloes had been crossing the stream for centuries and for centuries more would continue to cross.

I turned from the river to find myself surrounded by a crowd of Indian children with their mothers, all gazing wide-eyed at my Western dress. "They see few people like you here," said the A.D.C., apologising for this quaint gathering. "Things have changed very little here for a thousand years."

"Do I represent the future?" I asked.

My guide smiled at the question.

"I should be glad in many ways to believe it," he said, "but sorry in others. We who are dedicated to progress must sometimes feel a strange regret at the passing of so much that is beautiful in the past. I should like to have the 'best of both worlds' as the English say, but who can control the trend of human destiny?"

As we went back to the town I saw the old fort standing out in the sunset's brief glory, and seeming to frown upon the quiet streets below. The grey mud walls were touched with colour by the glowing light of the western sky and the many loopholes stood out darkly like hostile eyes. The great gate at the entrance, its stone arch carved with stories of battle, threw a deep purpled shadow across our path. For a moment I felt myself back among the warrior emperors. Then I heard the voice of the A.D.C. "Our police station," he said.

In the neighbouring town of Phagwara stands the

sugar factory, named after the Maharaja, and no less than his schools and the Kapurthala mosque built for the Muslims by His Highness, a monument to his many-sided activities. When I saw it production had not been started, but the Czechoslovak manager demonstrated the process to which the beet would be subjected. Everything was the last word in modern scientific efficiency, and I was shown the calculations as to output and running costs on which the hopes of the Mahajara and his technical advisers were based. The factory is now in full swing, and is, my friends in Kapurthala tell me, a great success. An invitation to the opening ceremony reached me in Egypt a year late, after following me over many thousand miles of journeying.

One day, having tried to do too much sight-seeing, I found myself with a slight but persistent headache. The kindly A.D.C. at once suggested that we should adjourn to the nearest medical depot for treatment. The young native orderly who was in charge immediately produced some aspirin tablets and I took several with me to take at intervals if it should prove necessary. One of the native servants who were with our party watched with great awe as I took the little white pills.

"The memsahib also has faith in the Prophet?" he asked.

I could not understand what he meant at first, but soon I gathered that he had a great personal regard for the aspirin tablets.

"Goli Paighambar!" he said with great excitement. "Bursham al Nebi! Goli Paighambar!"

That means the "pills of the Prophet," I thought. Why does he say that? I asked him, and the result was a torrent of speech.

"Ah, those white Goli," he said. "They cure all ills. I have a pain in my back. They give me

just three pills and it is gone. My mother have pain in her neck—she have only two pills and all is happy. My sister has pain in her teeth—one pill, one little white Goli, and she is better. And now the memsahib has pain in the head and she, too, is made well. Truly these pills are from Allah."

I couldn't help laughing at the thought of the products of a famous London firm of chemists being described as the work of the Prophet; but since the aspirin added my headache to the long list of its cures I have pleasure in reporting this strange testimonial to its virtues.

In the last week of my stay in Kapurthala I went with His Highness to the official opening of the State's first cinema. The film which was shown was of Indian production and gave a vivid representation of old Indian legends. It was preceded by a stage production in the best American style—dancing girls and music, but instead of the mechanical evolutions of the modern West, we saw the perfect grace of India in its most finished form. What drew forth most cries of wonder from the onlookers, however, was the news reel. "In truth our ruler is great and wonderful," said a native to me, "for does he not bring the whole world before our eyes?"

His Highness Jagatjit Singh, G.C.S.I., etc., has indeed served his subjects well. A widely travelled man, he has used the knowledge acquired during his travels for the continuous improvement of his State. His world tours, he told me, had taken him all over Europe and America, Egypt, China, Japan and the Java islands. He showed me the book which he has written concerning his journeys, a very beautifully produced and scholarly volume. In his work of developing his country he is ably assisted by five sons, all of whom hold high positions, not merely as figureheads, but as competent administrators.

The eldest son, H. H. Paramjit Singh Bahadur deputises for his father; the second son, Mahijit Singh Sahib, is judicial officer; while the third son, G. A. who served in France with the Indian contingent during the Great War, is head of police and Inspector General State Forces.

By their efforts they have made their territory in many respects a model State. The water supply is modern, the health services are efficient, the penal code is well administered and the jails are clean. Schools, colleges and museums are at a high standard of achievement, while the market services for the peasants are extremely well run. There has been and still is so much misery in the East that it gives me great joy to write of all the good works which I saw during my stay in Kapurthala State.

CHAPTER XXV

KASHMIR

AFTER leaving Patiala I looked forward with great eagerness to visiting Kashmir. I chose the Bengal route by way of Jammu, on the North Western railway, as this is considered the most picturesque approach to Srinagar, the summer capital. I had previously written to the Prime Minister telling him of my proposed visit; but the letter remained unanswered, possibly because His Highness the Maharaja was absent from the state.

From Wazirabba, a junction on the North Western Railway some fifty miles north of Lahore, we travelled on a branch line to Jammu, the winter capital of Kashmir. I was again accompanied by my brother, and we were able to hire a car in Jammu in order to travel to Srinagar, about 200 miles distant. This was a really lovely part of the journey, so we decided to devote two days to it, spending the night in a Dak bungalow *en route*.

All the way along this two hundred miles of road between Jammu and Srinagar we were charmed by the richness and variety of scenery. Sometimes the ground would be level, with brightly-coloured flowers and ferns on either side; then there would be glimpses of distant mountains, their peaks capped with glistening white. Every now and then we would dip down to the river, and pass some picturesque village, with its neat wooden huts and rows of trees planted on either side of the road. Everywhere, were clumps of the massive Chenar, national tree of Kashmir, much valued because it is supposed to create a pure oxygenated atmosphere. At one neat village we bought some of the famous Kashmir apples to fortify us on

the way. The fruit was given to us in a neat bag of woven wool, cleverly embroidered by the women of the village. Kashmir apples are large and red—a pleasant-looking fruit with a sweet flavour, and are sent all over India. But I do not think they are really so tasty as the fruit from European trees, many of which are now being imported and planted in the State. The native apples grow wild in the State and the trees are sometimes quite bowed down by the weight of their crop.

The last part of the drive from Jammu was along the Jhelum Valley road which swings along under great overhanging limestone cliffs with the river boiling its way tempestuously down below—a scene which reminded me strongly of the route from Teheran to Resht, in Iran.

After this most pleasant two-day journey we reached Srinagar, "City of the Sun," built on both sides of the river and containing a local population of some hundred and fifty thousand, three fourths of whom are Muslims. The rest are mainly Hindus, Sikhs, Parsees and Christians. Foreign travellers say that this town, with its colourful panorama of river and lake and snow-capped mountains is very suggestive of some place in Switzerland. When we arrived at the capital we went straight to Nedus Hotel—a very fine place patronized by most of the tourists and well-to-do people during their stay in the summer time; there are many other hotels for orthodox Indians—some for Hindus and others for Muslims—and again, there are visitors who prefer to stay in house-boats or even under canvas. The house-boats are quite luxurious affairs, with three or four rooms and two bathrooms; each has a kitchen boat for the cooking and servants attached, and also a smaller boat, called a shikara, for actually getting about the river. The house-boat is not a native idea; it was introduced by a European some fifty years ago since when many hundreds of them have been built. Some of them are

occupied throughout the year, but they are mostly hired for the summer season. Although the idea of using one of these floating homes as a base for our picnics and expeditions appealed to me strongly, I must admit that I succumbed to the greater facilities and comforts of Nedu's Hotel. Visitors may not occupy houses in the town, nor may they camp in certain districts without special permission.

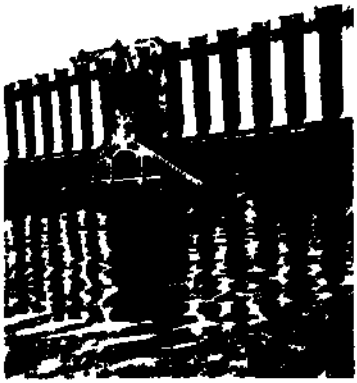
One lovely sunny morning shortly after our arrival we set out in a shikara which had been lent us by friends to see the famous Dal Lake. The shikara was a smart outfit provided with scarlet velvet cushions and sofas and paddled by a crew of four men. After passing through the Dal Darwarza lock, the lake is approached by a canal or channel of crystal clear water, overhung by willow trees. The lake itself—the most beautiful in Kashmir, is about four miles long and two and a half miles across—a glittering sheet of calm water in which are reflected bright-coloured images of the snow-capped mountains, chalet houses and tall chenar trees. Around its shores are market gardens in which vegetables are grown to be exported to distant parts of the country; here also are bright green fields with cattle grazing, fields of mustard and platations of fruit trees. So clear is the water that fish deep down below the surface may be seen darting to and fro, while here and there are clumps of the beautiful lotus plants. Perhaps the most striking sight to the visitor is that of the floating gardens—enormous basket-like structures of woven weeds, filled with rich earth and in which melon, cucumber, tomatoes and other fruits flourish. To see men tending the produce on one of these gardens as it drifts slowly across the still waters of the lake is a strange sight indeed. Picturesque though these gardens may be, their institution was a practical measure, since the soil around the lake is not suitable for the cultivation

of melon and cucumber. Many boats are seen on the lake, some carrying market produce, others drifting lazily with parties of sight-seers, while in shady places round the shores are moored house-boats of all sizes.

Another of our excursions was to the Shalimar Bagh, or Garden, approached by a canal opening from the Dal Lake. This royal garden was built by the Moghul Emperor Jehangir in the early seventeenth century, and was his favourite resort. We planned our trip for a Sunday, as on that day all the fountains and artificial falls are playing, adding great charm to the scene. The garden is entirely formal and, indeed, geometrical in plan, being arranged in a number of terraces and surrounded by a high stone wall. Although I subsequently visited the Shalimar many times, I shall never forget this first fine autumn evening: the great chenar trees with their leaves turning gold; the finely-carved black marble pavilion set in a pool with fountains round it playing and sparkling in the last rays of the sun; the many-coloured flowers, and away in the distance rising above all, the white-tipped purple mountains.

The Nishat Bagh is perhaps even more beautiful than the Shalimar, although I do not think it is so famous throughout the world. It can be reached by road, or from the waters of the Dal Lake, and is a favourite spot for picnic parties among the residents and visitors to Srinagar. Its main pavilion is a modern structure rather out of keeping with the ruins of the older buildings, but the highest terrace in the Nashat Bagh commands an unrivalled view of the distant mountains and the still waters of the Dal Lake. The country around these gardens is thickly planted with apple orchards, the fruit from which is exported to Europe, besides being sold all over India.

I was fortunate within a few days of my arrival in Srinagar to obtain an appointment with His



Lake Palace in the Mahalaya Kashmir

Beside the Shalimar

In the Shalimar Gardens

Kashmiri Lake Palace

Excellency the Prime Minister, who introduced me to the Minister for Education, and very courteously arranged for my visits to schools and other places. I was very amused by the disciplinary measures adopted at the very fine Mission School for boys and girls which was founded some thirty-five years ago. Any little boy or girl who will persist in talking during the lessons is made to stand on a special platform and talk aloud and without stopping for a set period. The idea behind this novel punishment is that the child will become so tired of its own voice that it will never again chatter in class. A similar penalty is meted out to naughty little boys who spit on the floor; they are made to continue with their nasty habit without interruption until they feel they cannot go on, even if they wanted to! In the gardens of this Mission School, which is a great help to the poorer Kashmiri people, is a fine lake where the pupils are taught to swim. Accompanied by the Director of Education, I next attended a Government school for girls. When I arrived at the school I was touched and rather pleased to find line upon line of beautiful Muslim girls in their fascinating Kashmiri dresses awaiting me in the school gardens. It had been arranged that I should deliver a lecture to the school, and it was rather embarrassing to find that the Director of Education, who had arranged the visit and had accompanied me there, was excluded from the lecture because so many of the girls kept strict Purdah. I found the girls very vivacious and intelligent; they questioned me eagerly about the countries I had visited, and were keen to show me samples of their work.

At one boys' school to which we were invited, all the lessons were being conducted in the open air; the children lying with their books on the soft green lawns. One class had been split into two groups, on either side of a lawn across which the boys were

signalling to one another with flags, semaphore fashion. Whether this was a relaxation or some part of military training I do not know, but when I gave a somewhat involved test sentence to one tiny boy, of surely not more than eight years, it was quickly read back to me by the other side without error. The last school I visited was one for girls, situated across the river, so that the pupils had to go to and fro by boat. I was very glad to see classes in sewing and cooking in progress, and to find that the school was equipped with a modern gymnasium on European lines.

Less pleasant, but every bit as interesting were the short visits to the prisons, planned for me by the Chief Medical Officer of Srinagar. The prisoners, I found, were given useful and instructive work to do rather than monotonous and soul-destroying physical labour. There is a large stretch of ground attached to the men's prison, on which the inmates are taught the finer points of agriculture; when and how to plant seeds and what type of soil is favourable for certain grains. I was much affected in seeing some men under sentence of death—the more so perhaps, because they did not seem unduly gloomy at their fate, but appeared to accept it with brave eastern stoicism. At the women's prison I was impressed by the kindness and solicitude of the doctor, whom the inmates seemed to look upon as a sort of father-confessor. To those who were sick, he could not have been more kind had they been noble and wealthy patients; others were asking him to see their children and report on their welfare—all of which he promised to do. Some splendid carpets and silken materials were being woven by the prisoners; I bought ten yards of silk stuff, the money for which was paid into the fund for helping the prisoners' families.

Since the largest silk factory of its kind in the world exists at Srinagar, I lost no time in visiting it as soon

as the necessary Government permission had been obtained. It is an enormous place, employing four thousand men, women and children, and the modern equipment is operated throughout by electricity.

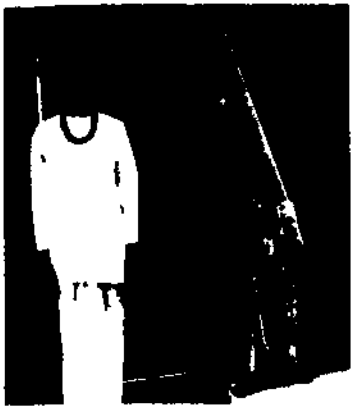
First we were shown the stores where the cocoons are kept at the right temperature, before they are taken to the reeling machines. Here the almost unbelievably delicate filaments are guided on to large rotating reels—four or more at a time—when they stick together because of their gummy nature. This is now the raw silk yarn, which comprises the bulk of the output of the factory, amounting to one hundred tons each year. Little weaving of the raw silk into fabric is done in the factory, but this may be altered in the near future; however, the State obtains a very handsome profit from the export of the raw silk yarn which is valued throughout the world for its quality. Electric power for operating the machines and lighting the factory is obtained from the hydro-electric plant on the Jhelum River. Curiously enough, the silk-worm eggs, from which the grubs hatch before achieving the cocoon stage, are imported from abroad —mainly from France. Mulberry trees, which provide the leaves necessary for feeding the young silk-worms, are distributed to the villagers by the State, which in turn reaps the benefit when the cocoons are brought to the Srinagar factory for sale.

A good deal of wool and woollen fabric is also produced in Kashmir, but, contrary to the general opinion, it is not used in making the famous shawls. These are woven from the finest hair of the goat; material which is imported from Tibet. The best Kashmir native wool is woven into a cloth known as "puttoo," which is becoming very popular all over India.

From the sportsman's point of view, Kashmir is a wonderland indeed. Whether your interest is in shooting, trout-fishing, mountain-climbing or in merely

collecting butterflies and wild flowers, Kashmir will supply your wants as perhaps no other land can do. At one time there was great danger that some of the wild life of the State would become extinct, but fortunately strict regulations as to times and localities where visitors may indulge in big and small-game shooting have been drawn up. Bears and ibex, leopards and stags—all fall to the hunter, but now in carefully checked numbers. Licences must be obtained both for shooting and fishing, while certain areas are reserved for the private use of the Maharaja. One such reservation is that of wild-duck on the Hokrar Lake, considered by sportsmen to offer some of the finest duck-shooting in the world. In recent years trout-fishing has become very popular within the State, the spawn of the fish having been successfully introduced from England. The Dachigam stream which furnishes Srinagar's water supply affords the best trout-fishing, but this again is one of the Maharaja's private preserves. In regard to more formal sports, there are some fine golf links and polo grounds in Kashmir; every year, too, cricket and lawn tennis are becoming more popular.

Perhaps after all, this country has most to offer to those lucky individuals who can admire wild life without wishing to destroy; to those whose greatest pleasure is to walk or ride through the ever-changing panorama of many-hued mountains, rich forests and upland pastures. Here on the northward slopes of the hills are spruce and silver fir, deodar and maple, walnut and elm in abundance, while everywhere in the valleys and around the villages are seen the noble chenar trees. Flowers, too, of every variety and colour are seen from spring to late autumn—anemones, slipper orchids, columbines, delphiniums, roses and countless others, both wild and cultivated. Fascinating birds there are in profusion—the golden oriole with its deep, bell-like note, bulbuls and kingfishers, warblers,



A Hindu Priest with a Kashmir

Kashmiri Children

Students of Punjabi College, Srinagar

Kashmiri Girls with Baskets

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wagtails, doves, redstarts and the paradise fly-catcher. And always around him the traveller may see the mighty peaks of Pir Panjal in the south, the largest range of the near Himalayas, with Tatakuti Peak rising like a sentinel but thirty miles from Srinagar.

While staying in Srinagar I had made up my mind to climb to the summit of Takht-i-Suliman, a hill rising some thousand feet from the shores of the Dal Lake. On its peak is a Hindu temple, but the Muslims declare that this is simply a rebuilding of the stones of their own original place of worship. My brother being unwell, I started the climb early in the morning accompanied by a guide; although the air was cool when we set out I was hot and tired after the two hour climb, so I paused for a while by the temple to rest and admire the view. For miles I could see the clear waters of the River Jhelum winding up the valley; nearer below me was the Dal Lake, its placid surface even now studded with boats of all sizes, lotus plants and the huge floating gardens. I was surprised how small the City of Srinagar appeared from this eminence; the sounds of a car or two floated up to me on the still air; then a burst of laughter and little domestic sounds isolated from the hum of the half-awakened town below. I was permitted to enter the temple itself—a round structure built of stone ashlars—and two of the monks, one a Hindu and the other from Tibet, very courteously took me round and pointed out the features of interest. They even allowed me to use my camera, so, having photographed the monks wearing their garlands, I asked one if he would take a picture of me standing by the temple door. Although this man had never held a camera in his life before he made a brave effort after my few words of instruction, in broken Hindustani. I was afterwards told that from the technical point of view the negative was one of the best in my collection!

Later the same day, I went to the Lal Mendi, a group of public buildings which had attracted my attention on the bank of the Jhelum. They were built by the Maharaja Partab Singh as a Royal Guest House, but the chief rooms are now used to hold the exhibits of the Partab Museum. Here is a most comprehensive collection of birds and beasts found in the Kashmir Valley as well as items representative of the crafts and industries of the people. Among the latter are some priceless samples of the famous Kashmir shawls, woven on the hand looms of Srinagar. There were shawls of the Mogul, Rajput and Sikh periods; one had embroidered on it the whole map of Srinagar City, with its mountains, lakes and public buildings finely rendered. Alas, this traditional craft of shawl-weaving has fallen sadly into abeyance; some of those with the necessary skill are now employed in carpet-making, a rising industry in Kashmir. On the walls above these exhibits are painted portraits of the Royal Family of the State: First comes Raja Ranjitsing who lost the kingdom to Raja Gulabsing during the first Sikh War. Gulabsing wisely sided with the British, and on payment of a nominal sum was presented with the Kingdom of Kashmir as a reward for his services. The last portrait is of the late Raja Partabsing, who, dying issueless, left the State to his nephew and adopted heir, the Maharaja Harising. Since His Highness the Maharaja became ruler he has done everything possible to improve conditions in the country; to make the life of his people happier and more useful. Many schools have been built for pupils of both sexes, and open to all, irrespective of class or creed. Hospitals, institutions, public buildings and social services—all have been brought up-to-date, so that it is not surprising that the Maharaja is loved and respected by his subjects of all religions and castes.

CHAPTER XXVI

TAJ MAHAL

Lost in a dream-wrought Cloudland, my journeying soul has seen
Blue water and blue breadth of sky with white towers poised between.
My heart cries out in wonder—what may this marvel mean?

Once a man loved a woman, and grieved that she was dead,
But though his white towers soared in air he did not raise his head,
Who built a shrine of loveliness for loveliness that fled.

I WAS eager to visit Agra and the world famous Taj Mahal.

The modern city of Agra is on the west or right bank of the River Jumna. It was founded by the Emperor Akbar in A.D. 1558 and called, after him, Akbarabad.

Architecturally, it is considered one of the finest cities in India. Its streets are clean and well paved, its water supply ample. It is famous for masonry, and above all for stone carving and mosaic. Its lovely embroideries, in gold and silver thread, offer an endless variety of design, and its gold and silver filigree work is famous throughout the East. It has many mills, factories and printing presses, and students come to its University from all over India.

The older city of Agra was made the capital of India in 1403, in the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi. Among the many famous kings who have ruled Agra was Babar, the sixth descendant of Timur, who was Emperor of India in A.D. 1398. Humayun, the son of Babar, succeeded him, but reigned only six months. He died in his palace at Delhi, and Akbar, his son, erected a mausoleum for him there.

Akbar was but a boy of fourteen when he was crowned Emperor. He lived to introduce a new religion, called Din-i-allahi, or Divine Faith, in which was worshipped one God, the maker of the universe, of whom he was the Vice-Regent on earth. His son, Prince Salim, was crowned in the fort at Agra under the title of Jahanger, or "Conqueror of the World."

It was Khurrum, son of this Jahanger, who, crowned under the title of Shahjahan, built the Taj Mahal, in memory of his favourite wife, Muntaz Mahal (the Empress Arjumand Bano Begam), who, to his everlasting sorrow, died in childbirth. She was noted for her beauty, and for her tender-hearted sympathy for the poor and distressed. For her wisdom she was appointed Keeper of the Royal Seal, and consulted in all important affairs of State. Her Royal husband conferred on her the title of Muntaz Mahal, or "Exalted of the Palace." He reposes by her side in the wonderful mausoleum, which is so justly regarded as one of the wonders of the world.

The Taj stands on the right bank of the Jumna, about a mile below the fort. It was seventeen years under construction, twenty thousand workmen being employed on it during the whole period, and cost six crores of rupees—more than £4,000,000.

On entering the mausoleum, Europeans uncover the head. Hindus and Mohammedans enter it bare footed, or in stockinged feet.

I was amazed by the magnificent beauty of this monument, and unable to express my thoughts concerning it, as many others have been. One of the Europeans who visited the tomb asked his wife to express her admiration. She replied: "I cannot describe so marvellous a building. I can only say that I would die to-morrow to have such a monument raised over me!"

Bayard Taylor has written of it:

HINDU TEMPLES AT BENARES

THE GHATS AT BENARES

FAIRS GHAT BENARES

TULAB (ROSE) FESTIVAL BENARES

"If there was nothing else in India, this alone would repay the journey."

The four great entrances are framed with marble bands, inscribed in black slate, with texts from the Koran, in the Tughra character, inviting the Pure of Heart to enter the Gardens of Paradise.

Everything in the Taj arouses admiration and wonder. The marble minarets, four in number, stand like sentinels guarding the tomb, one on each octagonally projected corner of the marble base. The arches and marble bands around the interior of the great apses are inlaid with texts from the Koran. All the inscriptions are in the Tughra characters, taken from the Suras of the Koran, appropriate to mourning and the hope of reunion in the hereafter. These inscriptions are exceptionally beautiful. Fourteen chapters of the Koran are inscribed in various parts of the Taj, and not the entire book, as is commonly believed.

The cenotaph Chamber, containing the octagonal marble screen, within which stands the cenotaph of Muntaz Mahal, the crowning glory of the Taj, and that of Shahjahan close by on the left, is decorated in Persian with texts from the Koran, including the ninety-nine names of God, and ends with the date 1048 A.H. (A.D. 1639). The cenotaph to Shahjahan is inscribed in the same manner, and is dated 1076 A.H. (A.D. 1666).

We each paid a rupee to the Shaikh or Mulla, who is in charge of the tombs, and he handed us each a white lily as a memento of our visit. We then descended to the mortuary chamber where, directly under the cenotaphs, are the real tombstones. A second Mulla gave us each another flower. I have pressed and dried these flowers and keep them still. To the west of the mausoleum is a beautiful mosque,

adorned with rich carvings. We doffed our shoes respectfully on entering, and the Mulla kindly accompanied us as our guide.

Our visit to the Taj was on a day of heavy rain. The streets were flooded; cows and horses were submerged to the neck, and carriages were actually floating. Nevertheless, peddlers and curio vendors flocked to the hotel by dozens. So numerous were they that we knew not of whom to buy. They offered us small models of the Taj Mahal, photograph frames, cows, monkeys and other statuettes of white salt-stone, black stone elephants, exquisitely carved and engraved boxes. We had already bought many such curios in the Taj itself, but I purchased as many as I could from the poor peddlers.

Our next visit was to the fort of Agra, a glorious building on the west bank of the Jumna. It is a vast semi-circular structure of red sandstone, surrounded by a double wall. It was commenced by Akbar in 1566, on the site of an older fortress constructed by Shah Selim. It took eight years to build.

Inside the gigantic fort we visited Akbar's Palace, the Jahergiri Mahal, a wonderful specimen of Mughad architecture, adorned by Hindu art, and in many respects, the most remarkable building of its kind in India. Every square inch of it is painted in gold and vivid colour, but especially beautiful is the drawing-room. Before the gateway is the Hauz-Jahanjiri, a huge bowl-shaped cistern cut from a single block of stone, with steps without and within. On the roof of the palace are a number of tanks from which water was supplied to the baths, reservoirs, and fountains of the palace and its gardens.

The Khas Mahal, or Private Palace, built entirely of white marble, richly painted with gold and coloured ornament, was the "withdrawing" room in which Shahjahan daily met his daughters and the chief

ladies of the Zenana. Having seen it, we passed to the underground chambers where the Emperor and the Zenana found refuge from the fierce summer heat of Agra. I could imagine the Emperor and Empress resting in that marvellous place, cooled by the breeze of many fans.

We were told that close by this loveliness were the gloomy dungeons, to which slave girls were taken to await the executioner, and from which the silent Jumna received their lifeless bodies. It is difficult to secure admission to that unhappy place. I was eager to see it, but it gave me a sad impression of the tyranny and cruelty of ancient days, so I was glad to escape to the brilliant Shish Mahal, or Palace of Mirrors, so called from the tiny pieces of looking glass set in plaster, which cover its walls and ceilings, and in which we saw ourselves everywhere reflected. It comprises two halls, in the centre of each of which is a marble basin, the margin of which is ornamented with a scroll.

We had more than two hours sight-seeing before we reached the Samman Burj, or Jasmine Tower, built by Jahangir for his beloved Empress Nurjahan, who herself designed the inlay of precious stones which covers walls, pillars, and indeed, every inch of the surface, revealing the splendour of the Courts of begone times.

To describe all the beauties I saw in Agra would occupy many chapters. I saw the Golden Pavilion, once the residence of Shahjahan's youngest daughter, Rosharara Begum. Its walls are of white marble, its roof and spires of copper gilt, from which it derives its name. We passed then to the beautiful Diwan-i-Khas, or Hall of Audience, where the Emperor received Kings and Ambassadors. Before it is the spacious Throne Terrace, on which are two Thrones, one of

black marble, the other of white. On the black sat the Emperor, and, facing him on the white, the Court Jester.

Still in the fort, we passed to the Mina Masjid (Heavenly Mosque), reserved for the Emperor's private worship. Near it is the Hamman Shahi, or King's Bath, for he was accustomed first to bathe and then to pray, before passing to the Audience Hall to transact affairs of State. On the roof of the King's Bath are several marble reservoirs which feed the fountains and fish pools. The Empress, too, had her sumptuous marble bath, where she bathed with her maidens, or reclined on the edge of the water beside the fountains scented with rosewater and other rare perfumes. When I saw that exquisite place, I realised the great glories she had shared during the seventeen years of her marriage, and the Emperor's deep and true love for her.

On a lower floor is the magnificent Diwan-i-Am, or Hall of Public Audience, probably built by Akbar. It is of red sandstone, with pillars, arches and ceilings of shining white stucco. On a high raised seat of pure white marble, the Vizar received petitions to the Emperor, which were conveyed to the Throne room for the Royal commands. Just outside is the tomb of the Hon. J. R. Colvin, then Lieut.-Governor of the United Provinces, who died in the fort during the Mutiny of 1857.

Also within the fort is the white marble Gem Mosque, or Nagina Masjid, said to have been built by Aurangzeb in 1658 for the ladies of the harem.

The Pearl Mosque (Moti Masjid) is lined with the finest white marble, and is the loveliest building of its kind in the world.

Next day we visited the mausoleum of Itimad-Ud-Daula, which is the tomb of Mirza Ghia-ud-din

Muhammed, son of a Persian nobleman of Teheran, who came to India with his wife and son to make his fortune. Whilst they were crossing the Great Desert, his wife gave birth to a daughter, who, after an eventful career, was chosen as bride for the Emperor Nurjahan. She was called Mihrunnissa, or "Sun of Women," on account of her great beauty, but Jhanjir affectionately named her Nur Mahal, Light of the Palace, and later Nur Jahan, Light of the World. The Imperial coinage bore her name. Her father was made Lord High Treasurer and afterwards Prime Minister, and Jahanjir conferred on him the title of Itimad-ud-Daula, or "Reliance of the State." He retained this office till his death, and was succeeded by his son, Asaf Khan, the father of the famous Empress Muntaz Mahal. The Empress Nur Jahan erected this mausoleum, which is of the purest white marble, exquisitely inlaid in a variety of geometrical and floral patterns. Here are the tombs of her parents.

I have chosen no picture of the Taj Mahal for this book. There are some things which are beyond the range of pictures. Here, to end this chapter, is a song I wrote not long afterwards:

For my dead love no splendid shrine shall rise,
  Soaring into the skies.
But I will take my blade and scribe twin lines
Of song upon the grey and humble stone,
Song that shall soar true as the twin white towers
Of Taj Mahal, fairest of earthly things.
Mere words or mighty marble—all is one
  If the heart sings.

CHAPTER XXVII

LAND OF HEROES

Strong are the hills which guard this land,
Yet stronger they who guard the hills,
In grim pursuit that no man may withstand,
From the high crags, there falls the
Avalanche that kills.
And with an equal fear the foemen blanch
When from the crags there sweeps the human
Avalanche.

In Sanskrit the words Asfa Ghan signify "Land of the Knights," and thus it comes about that Afghanistan is known as "Land of Heroes." That the name is merited I have little doubt, for with whatever faults the men of the hills are charged, and I have heard a fairly comprehensive list made out against them, none can deny their bravery, which is more than mere reckless bravado or fanatic courage, being rather the unyielding tenacity of men whose whole life is a struggle against great odds. Herodotus speaks well of them, and I am prepared to believe there has been little change, if any, since those ancient times.

Of their origins it is difficult to write with certainty, for the ancient manuscripts are lost and the legends of the people have only the slightest relation to historical realities. I was told by one old man that the Afghans were descended from the great King Saul. "His grandson founded the race," he said, "so he is our grandfather." That was not very plausible, it seemed to me, but then neither were the Persian legends. These say that the name Afghan means sorrow and sighing, and that it was given to certain captives of Bukhtanassar—that is Nebuchadnezzar—who bewailed their lot. Somehow I cannot

see the Afghans, as I knew them, doing much weeping and wailing, though it is true that their music is mournful indeed, which may be the explanation.

The history of Afghanistan, in so far as it is known, falls into two periods, with the coming of Islam marking the break between them. That was a splendid religion for these grim fighters of the hills, and it is little to be wondered that they embraced it with fervour. Before the time of the Prophet there were many religions in the land, none of them really suited psychologically to the characters of the people, but all borrowed in scraps from their neighbours and mixed up with local spirit lore to form very complicated patterns of faith which only a few holy men claimed to understand. There was Buddhism, teaching resignation, Zoroastrianism from Persia speaking of right and wrong as day and night, and certain Hindu deities were worshipped, though often under different names. The Afghans were scarcely a nation in these times, for it takes a faith to bind a people together, and faith they had none.

It was the Caliph Amani Abdul Malik bin Marriam and his commanders who at length, early in the second century, broke through the barrier of the great hills after several invasions had failed. For a while the Afghans resisted with desperate bravery, but the appeal of the warrior's creed at length overcame them where mere force of arms would probably never have prevailed. They accepted the Koran, and from that time dates their rise to national splendour.

Few English people, I find, have any conception of the great culture which once flourished beyond the North-West Frontier. They think of the Afghans as savages, little knowing that in the days of the Caliphs culture spread through Persia over all the cities of the Afghans, so that a time came when Ghazni, the capital, was famous from Samarkand to

Alexandria and was thought of as the great rival in scholarship of mighty Bagdad. In those days students travelled many hundreds of miles to attend the schools of the Islamic philosophers which had grown up in Ghazni, so that the city was spoken of as a light to all the world.

But every empire in turn since the history of man was first recorded has swollen to unwieldly size and then shaken itself to pieces when the force at the centre could no longer hold the huge circumference, and so the Moslem empire began to crack at last, the first dissensions showing in Afghanistan. The revolt succeeded, and not only was the hold of imperial Islam broken, but much of Persia was made subject to the nation of the hills. Military glory went from strength to strength, but the light of knowledge faded. Cut off from the central sources of learning, the colleges of Ghazni sank into insignificance, and the culture of centuries vanished in a short space of time, its precious documents, which would tell the historian of to-day much that he seeks to know in vain, being scattered to the winds and lost. For a while the Afghans prevailed in the field, but the tide of battle turned, and the Persians threw off their yoke. When next the hillmen recovered their unity and power it was to India that their covetous gaze was turned. The Moghul Empire was cracking and there were rich spoils to be had for brave and ruthless invaders. What the barbarians did to Rome the Afghans did to India. From Kabul and Kandahar they launched repeated raids upon the fertile river plains below. Not till the power of Britain was established in India was the frontier brought under control, and few who read the exciting history of those mountain wars have any idea of the huge cost in men and money which they entailed.

Having gained reasonable success in warfare, the

British learned to further their interests by subtle policy. It was well that they did so, and that their intelligence service along the frontier worked so well, for at the time of the world war German agents were straining every nerve to launch a great Mohammedan revolt upon British India, and Afghanistan was the starting point on which they based their hopes. Even now there are those who view with concern the state of affairs in the hills. During the war a system of vast bribery kept the tribes in check—or at least, so I have been told, and since that time there have been several periods when Moslem fanaticism has reared up in its crudest forms. One of the great tragedies of the East was the fall of King Amanullah. Queen Souraya, his wife, whose beauty made such a stir in the capitals of Europe, was a true friend to me, and it was she who first made possible my travels. I heard from her lips the whole story when I met her some years after the revolution which lost her husband his throne. He paid the penalty of defeat and exile for wishing to speed up the progress of his people more than their hold on ancient custom would allow. Dazzled by the scientific marvels of the West he did not realise how little they weighed with his subjects against a single text of a holy book or one word from a mad priest who denounced the King as an unbeliever. Had he stayed in his land all might have been well, for his personal character was such that all who had contact with him loved him. But in his absence the vilest slanders were circulated, and there was none to contradict them. Indeed, they had done their work before the officials of the court heard of them, so quickly does such poison spread.

Pictures of the Queen in evening dress were circulated among the villagers of the mountains and clawed over in the alleys of the bazaars, and it was these on which the mad priests based their wild

charges. Only those who know the code of the East can realise the terrible nature of the accusations of which these pictures appeared to be ample proof; but even so Amanullah might have weathered the storm of words had he not, upon his return, attempted to enforce a number of decrees similar to those made for the Westernisation of Turkey. The Afghan is, in many ways, slow and lazy, for all his vigour when aroused, and the foul scandals related concerning the conduct of his King and Queen in Europe did not really move him, at least not to action; but the enforcement of decrees coming on top of the scandals gave them added point and personal force to every man.

My stay in the Afghan capital was a long one, and I lived the whole time in the palace save when we were on expeditions into the mountains. The King and Queen were absent for the greater part of my visit, and only returned just as I was leaving. I had only reached the frontier when the first signs of trouble appeared, though it was some little time before the gravity of the revolt was realised. It is easy to claim wisdom after the event, but in my letters to my father at this time I expressed my fears. Many things had combined to produce in me a sense of uneasiness. In one village I had been pelted with stones and mud as a shameless woman because of my European dress, and had heard many muttered words of reproach even when no violence was offered. On another occasion a great deal of minor damage was done to our car when it was left for an hour on a lonely hill trail while we searched in the clefts of the rocks for rare flowers.

The Queen Mother was my hostess in the palace, and she was a great lady whose ruling passion was for the arts of the housewife, of which she was superbly mistress. The cookery of the country can be exquisite, and at her hands it reached its highest

levels. The main dish, pelaw, which can become monotonous in the East, so certain is it to make its appearance, took on new character when she prepared it. Never have I known so many and such delicious flavours added to the staple dish. She would call me to help her in the palace kitchen, where she directed operations, often performing the more difficult tasks with her own long-fingered and supple hands.

Life in the palace in those days was calm, well-ordered and of a beautiful simplicity. We rose in our airy chambers to breakfast in the soft morning sunlight, gazing as we ate upon the delicate greens of the mulberry leaves and the dark magnificence of the far off hills. Mountains ringed us in, but they never drew near oppressively save when there were storms brewing amid their crests. There were many kinds of storm, and as I watched them from the shelter of the palace, I felt that nature was revealed to me in all the many aspects of a multiform personality. Some storms were sly and treacherous, others bluff and open in their rigours. Even worse than the knife-edged rains were the occasional dust storms which seemed to leap from nowhere and attack us with mean and pointless fury; but the climate was mild on the whole and in the palace gardens, where often we picnicked, seeking cool shade in the heat of the day, there were nooks of green and peaceful loveliness where I delighted to lie.

Kamsin, the court singer, was a good friend of mine, and he would teach me beautiful verses, singing or declaiming the words in a voice of great power and range, though yet of tender beauty. In one thing only did he mock me, and then with such delicate wit and I was compelled to smile. He knew that I belonged to the Young Women's Christian Movement who abstain from alcohol, and this to him was to deny one of God's greatest gifts to man.

So he would sometimes turn towards me when he was singing a beautiful song and show that it was to me that the words were directed. The first time I thought some compliment was intended, but I soon saw by the smiles that it was a jest that I could not share.

"You think that a beautiful song?" he would ask when he had finished singing.

"Indeed, yes," I would say.

He would smile with childish wickedness.

"It is in praise of wine. Do you think it beautiful still?"

"Yes," I would answer. "Your singing is such as to make beauty out of evil. A dangerous gift, that —so beware."

At last he would translate the words. One song that I specially remember praised wine as the magic fluid which could turn the dullest day to golden sunlight.

"Sprinkle with wine a withered tree,
It shall be green once more,
For there is life within the grape
Which gladly into all my veins I pour.

Let a hoarse crow but taste of wine,
And he's straight a nightingale.
None shall decry this friend of mine
Whose virtues never fail.

The dullest day one ruby glass
To glowing gold shall change,
And the slow hours shall swiftly pass
In colours rich and strange."

That is the sort of thing that Kasmin loved to sing, not great poetry by any means, but a jolly song enough for one whose life was passed in pleasant places. I often wonder what happened to Kasmin in the troubled times which came, but I am sure that he could have charmed his way out of any dangerous situation with that voice of his. Sometimes he sang of love, and

these were marvellous songs. Their imagery was bold as that of the Song of Solomon, but there was a truth and tenderness in words and music that haunts my memory still.

One day it was decreed that any poor man who wished might come and carry away the ripe fruit of the mulberry trees, and Kasmin, who poured out his songs for all men, for he was no subtle courtier but a true artist in song, delighted them with his singing, so that they paused in their gathering to hear him.

I found that the mulberry was much esteemed by the women, who made a certain paste of which it was a principal ingredient. This was moulded into round balls and the men would take them on long journeys over the hills. So nourishing was this food that it was told me that on one roll of it a man might live for two days, and cover sixty miles of rough country.

They are a hardy people, but it cannot be said that their manners are gracious to strangers. They are suspicious by nature, and are slow to make a friend. The women must, I think, be the most talkative and quarrelsome creatures in the world. They have made an art out of repartee, and endless verbal wrangles are among their chief amusements. If a woman has a grudge against her neighbour she will hire a skilled "scolder" to abuse her enemy. Then such a stream of invective is loosed upon the air that one marvels at the fertility of the female mind. To be at a loss for a scurrilous answer is to suffer disgrace. I watched many of these scolding bouts, and laughed till I cried at the verbal dexterity displayed. At first I took them seriously, but I soon saw that it was mostly a great joke, of which the real cream lay in a pretence of seriousness. No one ever seemed the worse for these tirades, and if hour upon hour was wasted by them that signified nothing, for time was endless in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SCOURGE OF THE HILLS

THEY both began life as coolies in the crowded bazaars of Peshawar. They both came from the bare villages that abound in the valleys of the Suleiman mountains. They both belonged to the fierce Afridi tribes that inhabit the wild regions of the N.W. Frontier of India.

They both became full-fledged monarchs, ruling over the millions of people they conquered.

One of them was the notorious water-carrier and bandit Bacha-I-Saqa, who conquered Afghanistan and caused King Amanullah to flee his country. And the other is that strange, mysterious personality, the Fakir of Alingar, who still wields the influence of a monarch over a large part of the Indian borderland.

Picturesque and interesting is the career of the Fakir of Alingar, who is locally known as "the Holy Man of the Suleiman Mountains." He is at present engaged in stirring up his wild tribesmen against the British in sympathy with the Arabs of Palestine.

Some forty miles from Peshawar city, on the Peshawar-Kabul road, there hangs a small board from the roof of an unostentatious wooden sentry post, "Frontier of India." That board, plain though it is, carries a warning. It almost forbids a traveller from crossing that line. For beyond it lies the "No-Man's-Land," which is ruled over by the Fakir of Alingar.

It is a bare, brown country, full of stunted, thorny shrubs and large boulders of rocks. It is bounded on all sides by the towering heights of the Suleiman mountains. It is ominously silent. Not even a bird flies across the wilderness to stir the tranquil air.

But that tranquillity is deceptive. For, at any time, anywhere, the shrubs and boulders which look so lifeless, may become alive with the detonations of bullets. The parched ground which looks so serenely brown, may throw up hundreds of tribesmen frenziedly shooting in all directions and shouting their war slogans.

These tribesmen who are lying in wait on the sides of the Peshawar-Kabul road are the soldiers of that phantom figure, the Fakir of Alingar, the man who once carried loads in the bazaars of Peshawar.

To-day he is practically a monarch ruling over hundreds of thousands of his tribesmen, though he still maintains about him a veneer of asceticism by posing himself as the "Holy Man of the Suleiman mountains."

For the last thirty years he has swooped upon the plains of the Mohammed country, looting caravans, ravaging towns, and giving relentless battles to the "enemies of the holy country," the white men. Like lightning he has raided villages and evaded the British regiments maintained there. He is a terror to the British officers who are in charge of that area.

A peculiar personality is the Fakir of Alingar: a blending of ferocity and kindness: one who combines the qualities of chieftainship with the greed of a desperado.

He is the son of a caravan driver. Poverty forced him to earn his living as a coolie at an early age. A few years later, when he was still a young man, he quitted Peshawar and took to sheep-farming in his native village. Then, all of a sudden, he turned religious and retired to the barren heights of the Suleiman mountains, which he has made his home ever since.

He practised meditation. With meditation and Yogic exercises he acquired secret powers by which he could influence other people. He collected a

following of Mohammedan shepherds. The mere touch of his hand was credited to cure a person of his illness.

When his followers increased he opened an Asram for his most devoted disciples. This Asram was a cave in which the disciples had to sleep on goat skins and cover themselves with grass instead of blankets. They had to exist on a diet of raw meat and uncooked rice. Strictest discipline was observed in this Asram. His fame spread in the neighbouring territory. People began to call him the Holy Man of the Suleiman mountains.

Then this religious ascetic aspired for power. He trained his disciples in the art of marksmanship and mountain warfare. He obtained guns for them—from where is a mystery. He thus became the leader of a military squad.

As the supreme adviser of all the peoples of the N.W.F. he called upon the Afridi chieftains to give him their allegiance. Some of them did. Those who refused were defeated in battles by this sect of religious-militarists. Within a short time he brought quite a large area under his influence.

However, he soon came in conflict with the British Government. His armed bands clashed with British regiments. He has remained a sworn enemy of the British ever since. In his frenzied speeches in the tribal "Jirgas" he calls upon his tribesmen to annihilate "the descendants of Satan." His mission in life is to clear the Mohammed country of the Whites.

No white soldier or civilian ever dare go near the place where the Fakir has taken up his headquarters, for fear of terrible vengeance. Only one white man, it is said, succeeded in prevailing upon him. Colonel Lawrence, when as Aircraftsman Shaw he was engaged in a mysterious mission in the Mohammed country just before the terrific Afghan civil war in which King Amanullah lost his throne and the

water-carrier Bacha-I-Saqa became King, requested the Fakir to remain neutral. Such is the immense influence of the Holy Man of the Suleiman mountains, that it is widely believed that his failure to aid Amanullah was the deciding factor, and that the British Government purchased his neutrality.

Though principally the Fakir is engaged at present in raiding and sniping activities, he enjoys the full powers of a monarch. He is six feet six inches tall. His face is adorned with a drooping beard and bushy eyebrows. He is an expert marksman and a champion wrestler. Once he wrestled with two mountain bears and killed them by tearing their entrails out with his sharp nails. He is also a champion eater: eats a whole goat for one meal.

The other bandit, Bacha-I-Saqa, was more ambitious and cunning. That is why he succeeded in his undertaking beyond his own dreams, and fell down from the pinnacle of power and glory with equal suddenness.

Bacha-I-Saqa was a woman's man. He liked women because they wore jewels. During his bandit days in the N.W. Frontier he specially singled out women for his victims. Whenever a woman disappeared from some village they always said "It is the work of Bacha."

As a young man he also carried loads in Peshawar. When he could not earn enough he begged. However, that honest, law-abiding life was too tame for this born fire-eater. He wanted to become rich: he wanted to become powerful. And the easiest way to acquire riches and power was to become a highwayman.

He soon collected a group of followers around him. He called them his "companions." He secured promises from them not to live an extravagant life, but to surrender all that they had looted into his care.

This treasure would be accumulated in some unknown spot, said Bacha to his colleagues, and then one day, when it was sufficiently big, they would all share it equally among themselves. His companions, taking him at his word, gave him all they had.

They stole rifles from British military outposts and armed themselves into a strong gang. They swooped upon caravans, killed the drivers, and appropriated the camels, which they used for their own transport. They even went so far as to confiscate motor coaches that ran between Peshawar and Kabul, and left the miserable passengers to walk scores of miles to their destinations in the dreary heat. Horses and mules they snatched from the poor village peasants.

Thus Bacha and his companions became a strong, swift military column. With rifles also came machine guns, hand grenades, and even small cannons. And the spearhead of their column was always a good-sized tank.

This band, known as the Wolves of Kandahar, made sensational raids upon towns, villages, and market places, from Hevat to Nasirabad and Peshawar to the Persian border. They were well-planned raids, directed with superb military skill. Their chief aim was loot. They first sacked a town, piled the wealth on camel backs, and then turned to other business such as shooting. Shooting was Bacha's favourite sport. He would collect some inhabitants from the looted town, for no reason whatsoever, and put them against the wall. Then he would himself take a rifle and do the firing. However, he never shot them outright, but first maimed their hands, then their legs, then their bodies, and at length, while the poor creatures groaned with pain, he used personally to sever their throats with his dagger. Cruelty was great amusement to him. "Obey Bacha, the Terrible, or Suffer" was his warning.

Then arrived the time for Bacha to soar into the skies. From a seat in the rockgirt Suleiman mountains he was to elevate himself to the kingship of Afghanistan. King Amanullah had returned from his European tour and was trying to Westernise his subjects. The rough, fanatical mountainmen would not listen to it. Discontent prevailed in every part of Afghanistan. There were sporadic risings of peasants.

And out of the chaos emerged a man who said he would redress the people's grievances, who would pin the tyrant on a cross, who would liberate Afghanistan from the pernicious influence of Amanullah.

This great saviour, this staunch crusader, was no other than the bandit Bacha-I-Saqa, who was regarded with fear all over the Mohammed country.

With his wealth he got together a band of hirelings, collected a large force of discontented villagers, and marched against Amanullah. People thought he was mad to wage a war with a powerful monarch, but Bacha-I-Saqa had calculated well. He defeated Amanullah's forces and caused him to flee the country.

When he triumphantly entered the gates of Kabul every one hailed him as a saviour of Islam. But Bacha was not a saviour of Islam. He was only an expert collector of treasures.

On assuming kingship of Afghanistan he ordered the city of Kabul to be looted. For a whole week his hirelings set about people, searched their houses, and removed everything that had any value. Even such things as saucepans and brooms were looted. The rooms of the Imperial treasury Bacha searched personally. He picked out every conceivable piece of jewellery from the palace vaults. He then raided the harem and pulled ear-rings, nose-rings, necklaces, bangles and bracelets from the persons of the shrieking

women there. By the time the Sack of Kabul was over the city had become bare.

Then one night Bacha had all this treasure loaded on camels and mules. With his picked men, those whom he originally called his companions, and who were to share the wealth equally between them, Bacha made a secret journey to the mountain pass near Kabul. There this gang unloaded the animals and carried the sacks of bullion to a dark fissure. Into that fissure, under the personal supervision of Bacha, this wealth was poured. When the last sack was emptied a boulder was pushed over the mouth of the fissure to hide it from sight.

Then followed an act of treachery which was characteristic of Bacha. He ordered his companions to lead the way, and followed them. On a narrow path on the mountains, where none could turn back for fear of falling into the deep valley below, Bacha put his rifle to his shoulder, took a steady aim and mowed down all his trusted colleagues. Thus Bacha now became the sole possessor of the great wealth.

But Bacha's end was within sight. He had terrorised Kabul for eight months, but the soldiers of Nadir Shah were marching on the capital. His lieutenants he had shot down with his own gun. His hirelings were deserting him. By the time Nadir Shah's troops arrived at the gates of Kabul, Bacha was a lonely man. He tried to flee, but was captured. Without a trial he was condemned to death. The people of Kabul hailed his capture with joy. People sang songs in the streets, men marched in processions, feasts were given. The end of Bacha's terrible rule was the day of their redemption. In the main square of Kabul, Bacha-I-Saqa, the Wolf of Kandahar, the water-carrier bandit who ruled as a monarch for eight months, was boiled alive in a cauldron of oil.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WOMEN OF INDIA

If I, who had no jewels, brought you tears,
Pure diamond tears that shone awhile for me,
Guard well that gift, for all the merchant years
Shall never bring you statelier jewellery.

THE first thing which every educated Indian man and woman said to me when told that I meant to write about their country was this: "Please, please don't write another *Mother India*." Kathleen Mayo's book has bitten deep into the minds of the Indian intelligentsia. It continually cropped up even in the most casual talk. On the other hand, wherever I have lectured in Europe there had come this question: "What is the truth about child-marriage? Is it possible that such an enormity can exist?"

Now, as soon as I am asked to tell the truth I become uneasy. Pontius Pilate pointed out the difficulties attaching to such a request, and though his other *obiter dicta* have come in for censure, all philosophers have sympathised with him in his famous query on truth. In these pages I can only set down as carefully as possible my general impressions. A single traveller is not a Royal Commission, and though I sifted evidence as keenly as the limits of feminine logic permitted (very narrow limits these, I can hear male critics say) I was forced to rely a good deal on statements made to me, weighing the reliability of my informant rather than testing the story. I did have opportunities, however, for personal investigation, and I hope that I made good use of them. The impression which I collected I will now endeavour to set forth.

Child marriage, viewed historically, is not a measure

of the unimportance and virtual slavery of womankind in India. It is, in fact, a measure of the importance accorded to them from earliest times in family affairs. The family is a far more important unit in the East than in Europe. Family means not only parents and children, but includes the entire paternal relationships. The eldest son succeeding to family authority on the death of his father controls to some extent his mother, his brothers, and their wives and children. Nor does his responsibility end here. When the grandsons marry he is still their head. The amount of authority which he exercises depends a great deal on circumstances, and the mother, or a specially favoured wife may be, as it were, the power behind the throne; but in theory the whole family is bound together beneath a recognised head.

The head has powers and responsibilities, but in dealing with family matters he is bound by customs of great antiquity. The first essential of these is equality. Though some may fail and others prosper, in family matters there must be even treatment, while all have a claim on any family property, which though handed down strictly in the male line of descent, is in reality communally owned.

Obviously all this involved considerable complexity, and it was largely because of this that child marriage came into being. To enter such a network of responsibility unprepared was held to be too much to ask of a young wife. She must exercise considerable control in household matters and hold the balance fairly between many conflicting interests. Also, on her knowledge and tact the happiness and harmony of a large number of people will certainly depend. Three thousand five hundred years ago it was laid down in a sacred book of India that no offerings will tempt the Gods to dwell in the house of an ill-sorted woman, a statement which recognises clearly the

Punjabi Dress

Hindu Dress (Kashmir)

A Parsee Girl

Sikh Dress showing Kulpan (Sword)

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importance of the woman's part. This being so, it is easy to understand the advantages which were gained by the "marriage" of a girl while she was still a child. She entered the house she must one day control with ample time to learn all that was needful. Under her mother-in-law she was instructed in her duties, and not till she was of proper age was the second ceremony of marriage performed, after which consummation followed, the young wife slipping at the same time into her rightful position.

This then, is the social theory underlying "child marriage." It is not a modern Western conception of life, but it is soundly reasoned in relation to Indian conditions. How has evil entered into the application of the theory to-day? Well, since the coming of the white races the presence of alien standards of conduct in the country has been slowly weakening the hold of custom. That the standards of the white races are reasonably good in themselves does not alter the fact that they have set in motion a subtle degradation of social energies in the Indian people. There is no longer the same static condition of population. Mills open here and there and people drift towards them. Railways exist to speed the movements of Indians. Thus the family unit is broken, and with this disruption there comes a slackening of the moral codes which the family enforced. It is the old story of customs remaining while the conditions which called them into being change. This is always fraught with possibilities of grave social evil. Then, too, there is the economic aspect. The relative security of tenure based on life close to the earth is passing. With greater insecurity there is admittedly greater opportunity of money-making, but there are also the whole forces of advertisement creating demands in minds which were formerly contented. This economic unrest is also corrupting. There is a tendency for men to think of wealth not as

a family responsibility but as a rapid means of gratifying personal desire. In a small proportion of persons desire can be translated as brutal lust. From such people comes the ghastly evil of premature consummation of child marriages.

Every decent Indian condemns such practices as whole-heartedly as we Christians do; but some, from a mistaken shame, try to cover up the evil. Others bravely expose it. The psychological aspects of the problem are quite simple. The Indian would be much readier to co-operate in stamping out this vileness were it not for the fact that certain Europeans, in blind hatred of Hinduism, interpret child marriage even in its worst forms as explicitly sanctioned by the religious code. To suggest this is a terrible libel upon a faith which, despite its shortcomings in Christian eyes, is entitled on the grounds of antiquity alone to sympathetic study rather than indiscriminate abuse. One last point before I leave the subject, which I have tried to handle fairly in so far as is humanly possible. Suppose I had spent my time in England collecting from the criminal records every case of sexual assault upon children, what sort of a picture of the land should I have presented? Here is an extract from a recent book, written by a young man who found himself in prison and spent his time there collecting information concerning the penal system:

"THE SEXUAL DEGENERATE IN PRISON

Here is an extract from an actual prisoner's record —those small sheets of paper containing particulars of offences, with details concerning the prisoner:

Date: January, 19—
Name: Blank Blank.
Age: Thirty-two
Offence: Indecent assault on girl aged seven years.
Sentence: Eighteen months' hard labour.

Previous Convictions:

(1) Date: June, 19—
Name: As above.
Offence: Indecently assaulting a girl aged eight.
Sentence: Six months' hard labour.
(2) Date: June 19—
Name: As above.
Offence: Indecently assaulting girl aged twelve.
Sentence: Eighteen months' hard labour.

These are hard facts. I saw this record at Blank prison when I was obtaining particulars of a new arrival. The man in question was a labourer of the average type. Quiet, rough in speech, but apparently a decent sort of man so far as the casual examiner would notice.

This is not an isolated case. Our prisons hold many men serving short sentences for indecently assaulting little girls. Time after time they commit this offence, and time after time they are sent to gaol for short terms. In the days when I was articled to a solicitor and attended police courts in his company I came across similar cases. Later, in other prisons the inside stories came to my knowledge concerning these and other sexual crimes."

What fine play anyone attacking English character could make of that quotation. Yet I know, as does every sensible person, that the evil there displayed is the emergence of unavoidable abnormality, and can be neglected in any estimate of English life. The result of my enquiries has convinced me that the same is true of the abuse of child marriage in India. I beg my friends in Europe, while relaxing none of their efforts to extirpate such abominations as exist in their own and every other land, to keep the same sense of proportion which they apply to their own affairs when they consider India.

With the ground thus cleared I feel better able to give some account of what I found in my study of the position of women in India. I have lived in Indian homes and have shared the preparation of meals and other household duties. Also I have shared many confidences. So I write with personal knowledge of what it feels like to be an Indian woman. The typical house of a prosperous middle-class family is built of wood and baked clay, with perhaps a little stone-work for strengthening so that it surrounds three sides of a courtyard. The roof is flat, the windows small and probably glassless, but barred; and the floors paved with brick and stone according to the means of the occupants. The furnishing of the house is determined by the climatic extremes which may be expected in the district. In parts of India, especially in the centre of the northern provinces, the winters can be desperately bitter, but in other areas there is fairly severe heat all the year round and rain or its absence is the only mark of seasonal change. Cold weather means carpets of rich design and heavy pile. Extreme heat means thin matting of delicate mesh, with thin red lines and cool greens. The kitchen is given an important place in the domestic scheme, and you will see innumerable highly polished pots and pans ranged along a brick-built shelf. Mostly they will be of brass and earthenware, but nowadays the products of British industry are creeping in, and among the ancestral utensils you will sometimes see an iron saucepan or even some aluminium ware. The insides of the brass pots are silvered, and are kept as spotlessly clean as the outsides. Each has its particular functions, for cooking in India is a lengthy process, all short cuts being avoided. The various dishes, which are of hardly imaginable variety, include every possible flavour. Thus preparation is an utterly absorbing business. To-morrow's menu and even next week's

is planned and its first stages embarked upon, even while to-day's pot is simmering. Almost all the families with whom I came into contact were vegetarians, and I suppose that the immense pains taken with the cooking arose partly from that fact. To keep alive appetite and balance a diet is a more exacting task when meat is excluded from the menu. In the less prosperous of the well-off families I visited, the kitchen was often used as refectory, and the food was served straight from the long, low kitchen range of brick and stone into the round, shallow metal platters of the family, who squatted in a circle on their mats. The wealthier families had a large separate dining-room, kept as cool as possible, and then meals were served by a procession of servants, the housewife never for one moment relaxing her vigilance.

The Indian bedroom is a simple affair. The bed (or charpoy) is a large, four-legged structure, easily movable, and with a minimum of coverings. Mosquito curtains are a necessity, and these are often of astonishing fineness; but for the rest a few mats and water vessels complete the furnishing. There is always a wide doorway so that the bed can be pushed out into the open air during spells of intolerable weather. Sometimes near the big towns I saw an electric fan. In one house it was the single piece of modernity in a setting of Arabian Nights splendour, for the man was a rich merchant and the walls were simply ablaze with gorgeous silks. In this house, too, there was in the morning room, a huge raised divan piled with cushions and obviously the last word in ease. But such profusion of comfort is not usual. There is an austerity about the Indian home.

One very beautiful custom I found everywhere. In the centre of the open space which the house enclosed—courtyard was often too formal a name for it since it was open without gates of any kind

to all the passers by—there grew a tulsi plant. This is a sacred shrub, and every morning on rising the lady of the house would bow in prayer before it. On my enquiring the reason underlying this ceremony, I was told how, many centuries ago, when the Gods descended upon the earth and dwelt among mortals, a certain God became wildly enamoured of a single maiden. She was of great beauty, not only in bodily form but in mind and spirit. Though aware of the honour conferred upon her, she would not yield her chastity even to a God. She fled, and her immortal lover pursued her in wrath. Helpless she prayed, and was changed to a tulsi plant e'er the God could seize her. And from that day the shrub has had healing virtue in its leaves, while it is sacred to women as an emblem of chastity, the supreme feminine virtue.

I recollected a similar legend from the Greek mythology, and there was recalled to my mind that obscure passage in Genesis where it is said that the Sons of God looked upon the daughters of men and found them fair; but the main interest of the Tulsi ceremony lies in the emphasis which it places upon chastity. So intense is the feeling concerning this virtue that men and women never mingle at all. A wife's circle of contacts is limited to her immediate family and her women friends. Sometimes women group together and bathe in a sacred river, but that is almost their only recreation. Even when an entertainment is given it takes place without the presence of men. The whole of Eastern life is the poorer for this segregation of the sexes. Men are the losers. It is especially noteworthy how young Indians of the educated class value the casual conversations with foreigners of both sexes which come their way.

Strict purdah is often written of nowadays as belonging to the past, but it is surprising how much

SIKH IN UNIFORM

IN SINDI DRESS

IN SIKH COSTUME

MUSLIM DRESS (KASHMIR)

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it still exists. The purdahniskins—that is those women who still keep to the old rules—are borne for short distances in closed boxes—or palkis; and when they travel further are conveyed in the hooded Zenana carriages. These are four-wheeled carts, covered in usually by a black tent which completely hides their occupants. It is terribly stuffy inside and during the really hot weather a journey by such means is torture.

But though the horizon of the Indian woman is limited and her part in all save family matters is nil, it would be a mistake to suppose that there is general misery for women throughout India and that happy marriage is a product of Western freedom alone. In discussing these matters it must be remembered that freedom of choice of husband is far less in Europe than those who glibly talk of it imagine. Parents often bring considerable pressure to bear upon the young, and there are social pressures towards certain lines of conduct which are more powerful than parental "tyranny." Nor is the free choice of the young and unexperienced mind always a happy one, as the divorce courts testify. An Indian woman who has a good husband finds in the bringing up of her family and the running of her home a joy which probably surpasses that of the fashionable childless wife in London or Paris who dashes about in motor cars and discusses politics, art and literature with a feverish anxiety to be in the swim, and without knowing anything about them save what yesterday's columnist said.

Nevertheless, I long to see education available for the women of the East, and the better aspects of Western life thrown open to my sisters of the veiled lands. Speaking in general terms the progress of women's education in India has been painfully slow. It is well over one hundred years ago that a band of enthusiastic missionaries, unable to attract the attention of the Government to what they deemed a pressing

need, opened the first schools for girls in the three principal cities of India—Madras, Bombay and Calcutta; but still the task is hardly begun. It is more than eighty years since the Government has taken official cognisance of the need for educating the women, but money is still grudgingly expended, and no really systematic attempt to spread knowledge is made. Although there are a good many women to-day who have entered the University and have taken the same degrees as men, illiteracy is still the normal condition of the vast majority. It is a great error, however, to confuse illiteracy with unintelligence. I remember listening to a public storyteller in Umballa, and marvelling at the force and sublety of his narrative, which was fortunately in a dialect sufficiently akin to Arabic for me to be able to follow it without many gaps. Yet when I approached him as one of his craft and asked, with many compliments, would he write down for me the name of the tale, he shook his head and waved his hands helplessly in the air to indicate that he had no gift of letters.

CHAPTER XXX

POSTSCRIPT FOR POETS

Now here is a story for poets that they may take heart and know that in the East they shall find justice done to them and a proper reward made for their labours. In the time of a certain Caliph of Bagdad there lived in a humble dwelling less than a day's journey from the city walls a poet whose heart was filled with song but whose larder was empty of victuals. This he would not have noticed, or at least not often, for his mind was set high above earthly things, but he had married a wife in the haste of youth and now she did not cease to remind him of their impoverished condition. Always he quieted her with the assurance that when the great work at which he laboured was completed, which he swore should be in time for the Caliph's birthday, he would present it in person to his ruler, who would be certain to reward him richly. And so the wife mended for the thousandth time her scanty wardrobe and made thin sauces for the cooking pot, hoping always that it would be as her husband said.

At last the great epic was completed, and since it told in much detail the glories of the Caliph's ancestors, and said that though their brightness was as the stars yet his was as the sun at noon, the wife, though not skilled as a judge of literary quality, had nevertheless great expectations.

The day of the Caliph's birthday arrived and all made carnival. The houses glowed with banners and music clamoured to the skies. And when the feast was ended a moment came when poets were called upon, which was the chance for which the writer of

epics had waited. Thrusting past less assertive songsters, he made his way to his monarch's throne and in a voice of power and dignity, though yet of a certain sweetness, he declaimed his verses until the trumpeters, seeing that there might indeed be no end to them, sounded loudly as a sign for him to stop. Now, although at the end of a heavy meal few men will relish a further course of heavy verses, nevertheless it could not be denied that the poem had merit, and the Caliph said: "I thank you with all my heart. You are a great singer of the glories of my house. Doubtless your words shall live for ever, and many shall make pilgrimages to your tomb."

And so overjoyed was the poet at this praise that he did not realise until he had been conducted without the palace gates that the pilgrimages to his tomb might well begin right early unless his hunger should be stayed. Nor was he happy at the thought of what his wife would say.

In this his direst forebodings were amply realised, since her abuse was like sand in the cooking pot or thorns in the sandal, a ceaseless torment.

But suddenly she ceased to scold and lament, and said to her husband: "Tell me once more—what were the Caliph's words?" And he said: "Our monarch's words were these: I thank you with all my heart." "That is good," said the wife, "for now I know what to do." Without delay she went to all the shopkeepers of the neighbourhood and ordered from them everything that she required. And the poet was terribly frightened when he saw what his wife was about, for he knew there was no money to make payment when that fell due.

But when the tradesmen pressed for payment the wife was unperturbed: "I thank you with all my heart," she said. And when they were forced to indicate, with varying degrees of politeness, that this

was insufficient return for their goods and services, she said with scorn: "Have you not heard, then—by a new decree our Caliph authorises that thanks, if they come from the heart, are valid as payment—and I assure you that my thanks come indeed from the heart, or even deeper than that, and from the stomach."

When all the shopkeepers realised that this was no jest, and that she was determined to pay no further, they rose in wrath against her, and in due course she was taken before the Caliph, to whom the story was told.

"How now, woman," said he, "when did I make this decree of which you speak?"

"Upon your birthday, lord," she answered him.

Then the Caliph laughed. "Why, by the Prophet's beard," he said, "though I drank not a little that day, which the holy book forbids, yet was I never parted from my senses to this degree. On what do you base this foolish tale of yours?"

"My lord," the woman answered, "my husband is a poet and therefore poor. For many months he laboured night and day upon a poem in your honour, and he was privileged to declaim it in your presence upon the feast of your natal day—which may we all see many times repeated. But when he had done you said: 'I thank you with all my heart' and made no further payment. Now I reasoned that you would not give thanks instead of payment yourself unless it were the law for all your land, since I have long heard of your just dealings. In these actions of which the merchants complain you were my model."

Now when she had done speaking the Caliph laughed aloud and said: "Of a truth there can be no denying this woman's plea, for never shall it be said that there is one law for a king and another for his people, since all just laws are from God, and bind ruler and subject alike." And he said to the complaining merchants,

"Go your ways in peace and my treasurer shall make settlement with you for all your losses." And to the woman he said, "Send your husband to me, and his name shall be placed upon the roll of those whom the State rewards with a steady pension. For though I have little memory of his verses, whether they be good or ill, yet will I reward him for his wisdom in marrying such a wife as you."